

SMITHERS



SMITHERS

A True Story of Private Imperialism

By

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'The Golden Land,' 'Gotty and the Guv'nor,'
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WITH A PREFACE BY G. BOGUE SMART

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

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PREFACE

FILL your hearts with love for little children and you will never grow old,' was the reply of Dr. Barnardo to a question as to how he maintained his own perpetual youthfulness, despite the ever-increasing care and responsibility of his work. These words were spoken a few weeks before his death, when to all appearance he had before him many years of service in his beloved work of child saving—spoken unpremeditatedly, as they were, they give us the secret, not only of the sunny youthfulness of the spirit of the man, but also of his singleness of vision. 'This one thing I do' might well have been, and probably had become, his life motto.

Strange as it seems to us now, the poor, neglected, fatherless and worse than fatherless children of the slums and byeways of England were, a generation ago, an utterly neglected quantity in the body politic of the

land. Few, if any, laws for the alleviation of the distress of neglected and oppressed children appeared on the Statute books of Great Britain at the commencement of the reign of Victoria the Good, but during her long lifetime numerous enactments came into force, looking to the amelioration and social uplift of the children of the very poor, and these laws were for the most part the result of the unremitting efforts of men (and women as well) whose hearts had been stirred by the injustice done these unoffending little ones. A civilization that makes no provision for the perishing children in its midst—children perishing for lack of love and care, no less than for lack of food and raiment—is a civilization unworthy the name, and is happily a condition of things now quickly passing away.

Men like the late Dr. Barnardo have conferred an inestimable benefit, not simply on suffering humanity, but on those classes of humanity who were living in more or less guilty ignorance of the duty they owed to their suffering brothers and also indirectly to the State. Who shall say which was the more important result of his life's labours?

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Canada, the land of golden opportunities, during the last decade has been welcoming to her shores an ever-increasing stream of population, and amongst the strangers who enter her gates none is more eagerly sought for than the child immigrant, and none more warmly welcomed than the 'Barnardo boy.'

Consciously or unconsciously, on the part of the promoters, the emigration of children to Canada, carried on as it has been in so judicious and systematic a manner, has most surely been aiding the cause of Imperial Unity. The building and welding together of the Empire of Greater Britain is as truly being accomplished by the work of such philanthropists as Dr. Barnardo and his associates, as by the more apparent and determined efforts of statesmen.

The story of Smithers, so interestingly, as well as truthfully, recounted in the pages of this book, will no doubt arouse an increased interest in the work of child rescue. Many persons, heretofore oblivious to the work being carried on in their midst, will not improbably be aroused to the national and economic value of such an undertaking as Dr. Barnardo has initiated, in transplanting

these hitherto neglected young Britons to a part of the Empire where their energies will be directed into channels of usefulness, thus not only promoting their own welfare but that of the land of their adoption, and ultimately of the Empire at large.

A whole army of the predecessors of Smithers would willingly arise to bear testimony to the far-seeing sagacity of the man who made it possible for them to begin their lives unhandicapped by the adverse conditions under which so many of their fellow subjects are still hopelessly labouring in the mother country.

In commending Mr. Copping's narrative to the general public, may one be permitted to say, from a personal acquaintance with the writer, and an intimate knowledge of the subject, that one does so without reservation in the hope that a widespread interest may be aroused in Smithers and his fellows.

G. BOGUE SMART.

Ottawa, 1912.

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INTRODUCTORY

OUR United Empire has not yet learnt to think of itself as a unit. 'The British mind still fails to fill the British map.' Our patriotism is slow to leap old boundaries.

True, Imperial thinking has begun in the Dominions overseas; but the Homeland continues to be controlled by local ideas. It goes on enduring the disabilities involved in an insular national outlook.

What is the immediate cause of the appalling and increasing poverty in wealthy Great Britain? The number of willing workers is far in excess of the amount of available work. We have 45,000,000 people, and there are not enough jobs to go round. Our politicians may be justified in hoping that, with the social framework modified in directions variously desired by different parties, the area of employment will eventually be

sufficiently enlarged. But in the meantime millions of people in these islands are, owing to our congested population, unable continuously to secure adequate food, clothing and shelter. Faith preaches thrift and temperance, hope establishes the labour bureau, and charity provides its soup kitchens; but no amount of zeal and unselfishness can increase the demand for labour or decrease the supply of labourers. There are too many people. That is what is the matter with England today: an obvious fact which looks so ugly that our statesmen—our local statesmen—shut their eyes to it.

There happens also to be something the matter with Canada, Australia and other parts of the British Empire. Go from end to end of our trans-Atlantic Dominion, as I on several occasions have done, and you will find, alike on the fertile farm lands and in the splendid cities, the same reiterated grievance, the same persistent demand. Canada needs people. On all hands wealth-production in that country is hindered by a shortage of labour. Everywhere an eager welcome awaits the wage-earner. There is abundance of work, but a dearth of workers.

Looked at nationally, how baffling are those two problems of Great Britain's surplus and Canada's void. Looked at Imperially, how triumphantly does each problem supply a solution of the other. But, unfortunately, the British Empire still lacks official eyes, brain and hands. It is an Empire without an Executive. When representatives of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions meet to make Imperial laws and vote Imperial money, the question of adjusting the Imperial population will receive attention. Then there will be effective State action to ensure desirable migration within the Empire; and perchance a man who removes from Surrey to Saskatchewan will no longer be called an emigrant in departing and an immigrant on arrival—words around which cling associations of pathos and humility for which, in the circumstances of the modern world, there is insufficient warrant.

Meanwhile the logic of that void and surplus has proved irresistible, and we find private enterprise in some measure anticipating political action. The State—the local State—persists in the short-sighted practice of maintaining poverty at a heavy and continu-

ous cost ; but far-seeing societies of citizens—citizens of the Empire—have adopted the remunerative policy of transforming English poverty into Canadian independence. The philanthropists have got ahead of the politicians in applying an obvious remedy to an avoidable evil. While we await that large handling of the Imperial problem which is possible only to State machinery, let us recognize the pioneer work of our private Imperialists.

This book deals with one phase of private Imperialism—a specially interesting phrase which, because an Empire's chief concern is the well-being of its people, makes a strong appeal to British patriotism.

To my story a personal prologue must be written.

* * * * *

Ten years ago, as one of several British journalists invited to Canada by its Federal Government, I took a first general survey of the glowing landscapes and growing cities, of the beautiful blue lakes and glorious mountains, that lie between the Atlantic and the Pacific. And, of all the varied experiences of that trip, nothing stamped a more enduring

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image on my mind than an accidental incident which, occurring in a day's full programme of sight-seeing, seemed at the time insignificant. I had been chatting with some civic dignitaries on the railway station of an arising Alberta town ; and it chanced that there stood before me a typical farmer of the West—a tall young fellow whose bronzed face shone with health and contentment. He was, it seemed, a brother Cockney ; and my questions soon drew a modest admission of his substantial and growing prosperity.

‘ And so you come from smoky London ? ’ I soliloquized, as my eyes swept the vista of sun-lit prairie.

‘ Yes,’ was his smiling reply, ‘ I am a Barnardo boy.’

Had that full-grown man said ‘ I *was* a Barnardo boy,’ I think it likely he and his words would have faded from my mind. It was his use of the present tense that refused to be forgotten. Often afterwards I found myself thinking of the man who had so proudly borne witness against himself.

Passing through life, now in one set of conditions, now in another, we are for ever reading fresh experiences by the light of for-

mer knowledge, and there are beacons of the past that not only illumine the present but guide our footsteps into the future. One winter, in an East London district of grievous distress, I daily went in and out of endless adjoining homes that had been pawned to the bare walls and floor, where I saw emaciated mothers, men faint and footsore from the vain search for work, and huddled groups of half-starved children, with here and there a little pale corpse awaiting its pauper coffin. And sometimes, as I shivered among the gaunt figures in the yellow atmosphere of muddy West Ham, a tantalizing picture would come into my mind—a picture of grain growing beside Michaelmas daisies, gaillardias, and other wild flowers of the West, that glowing landscape serving as background to the figure of a smiling young agriculturist who had emerged from poverty-stricken English boyhood to prosperous Canadian manhood.

His unseen hand still beckoned me when, in 1910, making my opportunity, I re-visited the Dominion on a two-fold literary commission; it being agreed that, in the book I was to write for Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, the experiences of typical British settlers

should be revealed. Of course I interviewed some Barnardo farmers while zig-zagging about—in trains, rigs and automobiles—on the double journey across Canada's three thousand miles of plains, valleys and mountains. Of course, too, in "The Golden Land" those Barnardo farmers claimed a liberal share of space that had to be allotted between all classes and both sexes.

But when I had gathered that material, the beckoning hand did not cease to beckon. Rather was its invitation renewed with greater insistence. For I had obtained only partial clues to what was revealed as a stirring Imperial romance—I had done no more than turn a few pages in a living story full of human interest.

Another year was to elapse before I could give concentrated attention to that living story, studying its opening phases in England and afterwards tracing its stages of development across the Atlantic—months of work that have resulted, by the gradual operation of cause and effect, from my casual meeting with that thriving young farmer who recalled his past with such noble candour.

His name, if I heard it, is now forgotten,

his face has faded from my mind, nor can I recollect precisely where we met; but that fine fellow's six simple words, breathing a beautiful gratitude, have made him the real author of this book.

* * * * *

Where did the living story begin? For an answer to that question, I awhile went groping.

My subject had one starting point in the shadow-land of forty-six years ago. The facts, in their broad significance, are a familiar part of the social history of modern England.

Young Thomas John Barnardo lived not merely in the visible world. His deepest love and staunchest loyalty were pledged in realms that only the eye of faith can see. His heart knew wisdom, which is of two parts, inseparable and inter-dependent: the purifying of self; the rendering of service to others. Young Barnardo yearned to serve.

Against the wishes of his father, whose paternal hopes were concerned with worldly advancement, he decided to become a medical missionary in China—to which end, in 1866, at the age of twenty-one, he was attending

the London Hospital as a student, besides holding a Bible Class for alum children, twice a week, in a renovated donkey stable at Stepney.

'You say you have no father or mother! Where are your friends, then? Where do you live?' So spake the medical student one evening to a poor little thin boy, draped in scanty and forbidding rags, who lingered in that informal schoolroom when the rest of the class had gone.

'Ain't got no friends! Don't live nowhere!' replied the derelict child.

And later the talk ran on—

'Tell me, my lad, are there other poor boys like you in London without home or friends?'

'Oh yes, sir, lots—'eaps on 'em, mor'n I could count.'

Probably no single debate in Parliament ever brought to our kingdom and Empire a richer blessing than was to follow from those words, spoken by that incongruous pair as they peered anxiously into each other's eyes.

Doubting Tim's testimony, both personal and general, the medical student nevertheless felt his soul athrill with a terrible misgiving; and so, when the little outcast had been fed,

the two set forth in quest of evidence. Nor was it long before, clambering after his expert guide to the top of a wall in a Hound-ditch court, Barnardo beheld, lying exposed on the iron roof, eleven sleeping boys—some of tender years; all in torn and filthy garb; their upturned faces white with cold and hunger.

‘Shall I wake ’em, sir?’ Tim broke the silence by asking.

‘Hush! Don’t let us disturb them’ faltered the man who was overwhelmed with compassion, yet paralysed by a sense of utter helplessness. He had already resolved, by hook or by crook, to befriend Tim; but how, with the meagre resources at his command, could he feed and shelter eleven more? Looking up to the stars, he breathed a silent prayer—then hastily withdrew.

‘Shall we go to another lay, sir?’ suggested the little fellow whose naked feet went pitter-pat beside him. ‘There’s lots more!’

‘No, no,’ said Barnardo, whose heart was bursting.

Soon he had cancelled his intention to serve humanity in distant China. By day and by night the piteous appeal of those eleven pallid

faces was as a command that must be obeyed. Not otherwise could he think of Tim than as a messenger sent from Heaven.

The first Barnardo Home—opened in faith and maintained by prayer—was an old ramshackle Stepney Causeway house adapted to receive twenty-five lads. That number of wandering Arabs were soon enrolled in family fellowship; and when they experienced regular baths and meals, and found themselves enveloped in warm clothes and love, their faces shone with a beautiful gratitude that set Barnardo's heart singing. It also renewed his courage. And he had great occasion for courage.

For those twenty-five were but samples. Many more boys, unfed, untaught and untended, sobbed themselves to sleep out in the rain and the darkness and the cold—poor lonely ones shivering in the nooks and shadows of wealthy London; innocent little vagabonds hunted and harried like human vermin by the patrolling policeman. For, in the eyes of Society, those little fellows were guilty of a crime in that they were friendless and destitute, even though Society, by an appalling oversight, offered them no alternative.

Thomas John Barnardo had come into the world to alter all that.

He enlarged his Home by acquiring adjoining premises. He went forth at dead of night, walking softly, peering and probing into likely burrows, a dark lantern in his hand and slices of cake in his pocket; for so fearful were the homeless ones of any human touch, that Love must needs use wiles to catch them. He made up his mind to receive and succour all the destitute children that he could find, and all the destitute children who came or were brought to him. He prayed for the means and the means were provided. For his was the faith that moves mountains.

The Barnardo Home at Stepney Causeway grew by stages to be a united cluster of well-planned buildings in which four hundred lads were housed, educated, drilled and trained in various trades. But when that number was within those walls, still the stream of unloved little ones continued to arrive, and in growing volume. For it had been noised abroad what one man was doing; policemen now looked with new eyes upon small huddled forms crouching in the shadows; and London

brought its wronged children and laid them at Barnardo's feet.

Another Home—Leopold House, in the Burdett Road—was opened, and afterwards enlarged to contain three hundred boys. Meanwhile, a multitude of little girls,—some rescued from starvation, others from moral danger—had been gathered in. For them at Barkingside, Essex, a Barnardo village of sixty acres was created—a village with its sixty-six specially built cottages containing each a family of some twenty little maids; a tree-planted village with its spacious lawns and pretty flower-beds and winding paths, its well-equipped schools, laundry and hospital, and its big, beautiful church. Nor was it long before the accumulation of Barnardo infants constituted a problem, which was solved by the gift (at Hawkhurst, in Kent,) of a handsome 'Babies' Castle,' having ninety cots.

Of course, too, in the avalanche of young life there were many cases of physical pathos: which led to the establishment of Her Majesty's Hospital at Stepney (soon showing an annual total of over 600 in-patients and nearly 2,000 out-patients); of a Home for

Deaf and Dumb and Blind Children at Hackney; of a Home for Incurables at Bradford and another at Birkdale; of a Home for Cripples at Tunbridge Wells; of Convalescent Homes at Felixstowe and at Hove; of a Seaside Resort for Delicate Girls at Llandudno; and of Isolation Houses for children having ringworm, measles and other contagious disorders.

But ever the ordinary accommodation fell short of the need; and in London further Barnardo Homes were provided: for boys, at Grove Road, E. (Sheppard House), at South Norwood and at High Street, Clapham; for girls, at Mare Street, Hackney ('The Beehive'), at Downs Park Road (Chester House), and at Romford Road, Forest Gate. Not enough, still not enough! So additional Barnardo Homes came into existence in various parts of the Kingdom—at Epsom, Jersey, Cambridge, Northampton, Exeter, Middlesborough, Weymouth, Southampton, Scarborough and elsewhere.

A staff of investigators was constantly at work to ensure that only the destitute should be admitted; but by way of providing asylums where, pending inquiries, temporary

succour could be given to all needy little ones, Barnardo opened receiving houses at Stepney, and two shelters for homeless women accompanied by children—one in Commercial Street, E., the other in Notting Hill, W.—besides a series of children's lodging-houses (with ever-open doors) in thirteen populous centres of the United Kingdom, namely, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheffield and Southampton.

Still have I given but an imperfect outline of the human service rendered by that great, loving heart, which was mated to a brain of high, organizing power and to an energy that seemed unbounded. A modern saint who performed miracles! For no mere bent towards social reform could account for Barnardo's achievements. Zealously as he fed and clothed and cleansed and trained the little ones' bodies, his aim was always the welfare of their souls. The incense of daily prayer and praise, offered in a chorus of happy trebles, went up from all the Homes; and the Director's business office was also a temple of supplication. Nor could the res-

cuer of children be otherwise than moved by the needs of poor mothers and elder sisters and brothers ; and so he brought into existence that happy centre of missionary and deaconess work, the Edinburgh Castle, which seats three thousand persons, and is associated with Sunday schools, mission halls and factory girls' clubs dotted about the East End of London.

To whom has Barnardo's work brought the richest blessing ? Not, I think, to the tens of thousands of children whom he rescued from misery and danger, inestimable as was that service. Nor to the nation whose potential paupers and wrong-doers were thus transformed into law-abiding and productive citizens, a service only partially to be measured by many millions of pounds sterling. The people whom Barnardo has most befriended are, I think, the scattered multitude whose money gifts have made them partners in his work and its glory. To feed the hungry, clothe the naked and minister to the afflicted are obligations that rest on all, and with the greater weight when it is tender youth that needs sustenance, raiment and love. To be kind to children is, indeed, an injunction

printed on every human heart. Barnardo provided all classes with the opportunity, and a stimulus, to obey that injunction, and thereby to know the purifying gladness which comes of serving humanity and cultivating the most beautiful of all qualities—unselfishness.

Recently in the Royal Albert Hall I saw succeeding squads of trained Barnardo children, who interspersed songs and dances with gymnastic displays and the music of hand-bells, bagpipes and fife-and-drum—a feast of colour, gaiety and youthful graces rendered for the enjoyment of an onlooking host of children whom Providence had endowed with happy homes and loving parents: it being the twentieth annual fête of the Young Helpers' League, an organization which, in the previous year, contributed £23,076 of the £236,037 subscribed to maintain the Homes. That occasion revealed on which side the balance of advantage lay. In the arena I saw healthy and happy little people whose aspect testified to human service rendered with absolute success; but in the auditorium I saw little eyes shine with the uplifting joy that came of rendering that

service—a joy reflected in the deep content on mothers' faces. Truly the Homes afford great advantages to those within, but greater opportunities to those without.

In the issue of his magazine for July, 1905, Dr. Barnardo wrote: 'During the last three years our expenditure has, in spite of the exercise of rigorous and vigilant economy in all departments, exceeded our income. . . . But the cry at our gates ever rings louder and louder! The destitute, homeless, cruelly treated, unwanted children are knocking more numerous now than ever. . . . Let our friends all over the world, from the moment they hear of our condition, join in a great prayer circle which shall surround the children with their living sympathy, and which shall plead more earnestly and prevailingly than ever before for our Father's answer on their behalf.' He referred to the wealth of the country and to the millions of her citizens who seemed indifferent to their responsibility. 'They are not absolutely selfish,' he went on, 'they are often very kind and good-hearted; they *would* help if they only knew and realized the need.' That was the last article written by Barnardo,

who passed from earth on September 19, 1905.

He had gathered about him, in honorary service on his Council, and in positions of control in the Homes, a devoted circle of enthusiastic child-lovers. They carry on the work to-day, chief responsibility resting on William Baker (the present Honorary Director), Howard Williams (Honorary Treasurer), and William McCall (Chairman of the Executive). In their hands this great national institution, as wide in range as a Department of State, continues not only to gain in efficiency but to grow with the growth of poverty in an ever-increasing population ; one notable recent expansion being the creation of a Barnardo Garden City for boys at Woodford Bridge, Essex, a most promising innovation urgently needing funds for its development.

And not yet have we glanced at the most important side of this work. It was not enough to rescue helpless children from physical and moral decay, and to surround them with love and other necessities of youth. The Barnardo Homes needed two doors—an entrance and an exit. They must not merely be asylums for refugees from the nation's pits and whirlpools ; they must also be aca-

demies to train recruits for the nation's fields and workshops.

Stepney Causeway, and other Homes having technical schools, have sent into the world a procession of self-supporting bakers, cobblers, blacksmiths, tailors, brush-makers, printers, carpenters, tinsmiths and mat-makers. The pretty village at Barkingside, and the numerous Girls' Homes, have produced a multitude of qualified domestic servants, needlewomen and laundry hands. Hundreds of lads are being trained for the Navy, and for the mercantile marine, in the *Watts* Naval School at Elmham in Norfolk—a *Barnardo* Home not previously mentioned, and of which important branches are the *Walrond* Institute, at Great Yarmouth, and the training ship, *G. L. Munro*. Indeed, each Home founded by the Doctor and his successors is a hive of industry: girls of Barkingside laundry washing over a million garments every year, and boys of Stepney bakehouse annually producing over 200,000 quarterns of bread and some hundred thousand rolls, scones and buns.

But, in devising careers for a family that was legion, *Barnardo* did not confine his out-

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look to the British Isles; he suffered his mental gaze to sweep over the British Empire. While taking advantage of such openings for useful bread-winning work as the United Kingdom afforded, he realized, more than forty years ago, what most people are only beginning to realize now, namely, that there are far larger opportunities in the vast fair regions of the Dominions overseas. Setting up in Canada a careful system of sustained supervision, he annually despatched to that country several hundreds of carefully chosen young settlers of both sexes.

At first only big boys and girls were sent to Canada, but for some years past the Barnardo emigrants have included a majority whose ages range from nine to twelve, while nowadays a sprinkling of infants of seven and eight also cross the seas. This development may be traced to the spread of a system which, in the interests of the children, Barnardo adopted as supplementary to his original method.

Routine existence in the massed community of a large institution does not assist, but rather tends to retard, the development of individual character and capabilities. More-

over, girls and boys in an institution, however efficiently it may be staffed, live under a loving supervision that is general rather than personal, and they therefore stand at a disadvantage compared with boys and girls who are brought up under a parental roof. Barnardo accordingly established a system whereby, in private cottage homes of rural England, children are boarded out, singly or in pairs, with selected foster-parents, who receive a monthly payment that covers the cost of feeding and clothing their little charges. This system, which is associated with local supervision by ministers of religion, proved from the outset so successful that it has been adopted on an ever-widening scale, until to-day it applies to more than half of the children. That is to say, while the Homes have a standing family of over 9,000 young people (a family which, of course, is constantly increasing by new admissions at one end and melting into independence at the other), some 5,000 are boarded out, and the numerous Barnardo institutions are filled to their capacity by the remaining 4,000.

And what proved the more excellent way in England, proves of double excellence in

Canada. For agriculture is, happily, the goal of nearly all the Barnardo boys who cross the seas; and, being boarded out in Canadian farmhouses, not only do they derive all the benefits that result from the system in England, but they live in an environment which ensures that, on emerging from school age, they will already be familiar with their future work, instead of having to approach it as awkward novices. Moreover, for those boys (and also for the boarded-out girls), it is a great advantage to be initiated at an impressionable age into Canadian customs and ideas.

* * * * *

Thus did I mentally review the origin and development of that vast, beautiful work of organized love and systematized human service—a work which, being without endowment or State aid, is still supported only by prayer and the gifts of compassionate hearts.

At several of the Homes I saw orderly regiments, several hundred strong, of rescued and happy young humanity—just a fraction of the present-day army of 9,000, which in turn is but a fraction of that host of nearly eighty thousand children who, since 1866,

have been removed from sorrow into sunshine by the Barnardo Association. And on those visits of comprehensive inspection, many lads were pointed out as likely to be included in the next party for Canada—as likely to join the prosperous procession of Barnardo emigrants that has endowed an important part of the Empire with nearly 25,000 valuable citizens.

Undoubtedly those bright little fellows, looking so smart in their crimson-braided uniforms, occurred almost at the starting-point of my living story. But they stood high and dry on shore, already rescued from the sea of destitution.

Not till later did I tap the story at its source.

CHAPTER I

THE FINDING OF SMITHERS

BUT for the light of kindness that shone on his calm face, my substantially-built companion might easily have been mistaken for a detective, or, let us say, a tea merchant. His calling, however, was out of the common. He was an investigator, though not in the interests of either law and order or commerce. It was as the paid servant of compassion that daily he went to and fro in a congested population, carrying a large notebook in his overcoat pocket.

For my wish was to see a Barnardo boy who had not yet become a Barnardo boy ; to which end I was accompanying one of the Barnardo officials who, experienced and resourceful in sifting truth from falsehood, go forth to inquire into the new cases of alleged destitution of which, by every morning's mail, tidings are received at Stepney Causeway.

Along Commercial Road, across the City, up the Strand, we navigated London's human sea, then on the forenoon flood. For me it was a strange adventure: lifeboat work on the top of an omnibus; an unknown boy to be rescued from the social rocks. The signal of distress—a letter from the lady manager of a school near Richmond-on-Thames—had suggested urgency.

The letter told us that Roland Smithers, aged twelve, lived with his father in a hut, and often came to school fasting, bringing no dinner—a state of things discovered by the headmaster, who was now supplying the boy with food. The lady bore witness that Smithers, contrary to what might be expected, was a bright lad who obviously tried to look tidy and respectable, so she felt he was especially worthy to be received into Dr. Barnardo's Homes. The letter concluded by urging that prompt action be taken, because, as the hut had been visited by an officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the father might at any moment be prosecuted and the boy removed to the Union.

At Stepney Causeway I had asked to be

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associated with any ordinary application that seemed, on the face of it, to promise an admission ; and, as we journeyed up the Strand, I inquired of my companion whether, as far as he could judge, the case of Smithers was typical of the daily work of the Homes.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I think it represents a fair average. Of course the fact of a boy living in a hut is rather unusual, though we often find them in outhouses. But you could easily have happened upon a more affecting case—where, for instance, some poor little child is suffering from starvation, neglect or brutal treatment, which does not seem to be indicated by this letter. In fact, from what one may call the sensational point of view, I think this case would be below, rather than above, the average.’

Proceeding to Leicester Square, we called at the headquarters of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, where the representative of the Barnardo Association was cordially received on a familiar footing. But our visit yielded only negative knowledge—there was no ‘Roland Smithers’ on the records of the prosecuting society.

So we took train from Waterloo ; and in less

than an hour were entering the clean, yellow Council School of a suburban district of the Upper Thames.

The young and grave headmaster, on gaining a clue to our business, at once conducted us upstairs to a room which, when he had closed the door, afforded opportunity for private conference. My friend drew his chair to the table and lost no time in taking the evidence of the schoolmaster, who spoke with the restraint natural to a man who sees his statements being taken down in a large notebook.

An important fact brought to light was that Smithers, who had been only a few months at the school, alternately had access to two homes—his father's hut, and the more remote residence of a maternal aunt, who kept a little general shop. It seemed that the lad was welcomed at his aunt's only for week-ends and during holidays, he finding himself with no option, at other times, but to sleep under the paternal roof, of which more anon. And as the little general shop was within walking distance from the school, the facts seemed to indicate—as the keen-witted inspector was the first to point out—that the aunt was willing

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to house and feed her young relative only when, not having scholastic duties to engage his time, he was free to render little services in return for board and lodging.

That the schoolmaster, in addition to a warm heart, possessed acute powers of observation, was shown inferentially by certain testimony that he rendered reluctantly and only under searching examination. One day he noticed, upon the bell ringing for the noon recess, that Roland Smithers exhibited none of the enthusiasm with which a boy will commonly hail the dinner-hour. The suspicion thus excited being strengthened on fuller observation, the schoolmaster, taking Smithers apart, drew from his quivering lips the admission that he had brought no dinner with him and that he had eaten no breakfast that morning.

'So what did you do?' asked the inquisitor.

'Well,' the kindly schoolmaster was forced to admit, 'I took him home with me to dinner.'

The same thing happened, it appeared, on the following day; but afterwards—lest schoolmates should get wind of the state of affairs—

the headmaster, besides providing Smithers with the means to procure breakfast, adopted the considerate course of bringing a luncheon parcel to school and smuggling it into Smithers' pocket.

Asked as to the boy's father, the schoolmaster could only repeat what he had heard, which indicated that the man once kept a butcher's shop, but now dwelt in a hut, and was infirm, with a weakness for intoxicants and no visible means of livelihood. Then the schoolmaster went downstairs to fetch Smithers, presently returning with an upright and tolerably tidy lad who, so far from being thin, was well fleshed, his face inclining to be rotund.

By an obvious but successful effort of self-control, Smithers stood rigid and unfaltering before the inspector, to whose many questions he replied deliberately, with a sort of quiet doggedness. While his manner suggested a disposition to reveal candidly the circumstances of his life, he betrayed but little emotion, nor did he volunteer any disclosures outside the scope of specific inquiries addressed to him.

The examination elicited this information :

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After the death of his mother Roland had lived for four years with a Mrs. Walters, and he believed the reason he left there was because his father, whose butcher's shop had not been doing as well as it used to, was unable to go on paying the money. After that he stayed for periods of several months with different relatives, including an aunt who kept a farm in Wales and an uncle who was a naval pensioner at Portsmouth. When he came back from Wales the butcher's shop was closed, and he lived for a few weeks with his father in lodgings. On coming back from Portsmouth, he found his father in the hut, and he lived there too, except when he was stopping with his auntie at Fulham.

'Now, my lad,' said the inspector, 'tell me something about the hut.'

'It's on the field, sir, where father minds the horses,' Smithers earnestly explained. 'He has to be there to see they don't get away.'

'Oh, I understand, your father is a sort of watchman or caretaker, and his duties require him to be on the ground night and day?'

'Yes, sir,' the boy promptly answered.

'And is it a pretty comfortable hut?'

'Yes, sir—it's one my father built himself'—at which words I formed a mental picture of a neat little match-boarded residence; for Smither's tone seemed to reflect a filial pride in his father's workmanship.

'And you sleep comfortably at nights?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You don't find the place draughty or cold?'

'No, sir.'

'Your clothes are not damp when you put them on in the morning?'

Smithers shook his head; whereupon the inspector, missing a verbal answer to his question, went on to ask—

'Do you hang them on pegs, or place them over a chair?'

Smithers was silent.

'Come, now,' persisted the kindly cross-examiner, 'you surely don't mind telling me?'

Smithers dropped his eyes.

'Do you sleep in your clothes?'

'Yes, sir—in the hut, I do,' came the faltering admission; and still the eyes were downcast.

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'I see—not many bedclothes, eh? Now tell me, is your father ever unkind to you?'

'No, sir!' The eyes were raised now and flashing at the inspector.

'He never strikes you?'

'No, sir!'

'Do you sometimes see him tipsy?'

The displeased boy shook his head.

'When do you go to bed?'

'As soon as it gets dark.'

'What time does your father go to bed?'

'About half-past ten.'

'And he doesn't disturb you when he comes in?'

'No, sir.'

'Does he give you plenty to eat?'

Smithers' lips twitched and he was dumb.

The inspector waited for an answer.

'He always gives me plenty,' came the slow words, 'when—when he has any.'

'And when he has none to give you, you have to go without?'

'Yes,' said the witness doggedly, a flush mounting to his temples.

'You didn't go to any one and tell them you were hungry and hadn't anything to eat?'

'No,' uttered by lips that were tense but trembling.

'And after attending school without having had breakfast, you had also to go without dinner?'

'Yes—only now the master gives me some'; and for a moment his eye rested on his friend, seated silently at the table.

'But before that gentleman found out how you were placed, you went all day without food?'

'Well, sir, when school was over in the afternoon'—the words came huskily from a dry throat—'I used to call at Mrs. Goodwin's—she keeps a fried-fish shop, sir—and I'd ask her if I could do anything for her—run errands or anything—and, and,' he went on, still bravely battling to keep back the tears, 'she always gave me some fish and potatoes, sir.'

Watching this scene, I felt that the poor lad was on the verge of breaking down; but the tension on his feelings was destined to be relaxed.

'Well, my lad,' said the inspector, as he closed his notebook, 'if it can be arranged—and I can't say anything about that at

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present—would you like to enter a Home, and a little later on, perhaps, go to Canada ?’

‘Oh, yes, sir!’ And there was a note of eager entreaty in the voice.

‘Well, we’ll see what can be done,’ added the inspector; and he rose to take his departure. ‘You’re a pretty good boy at school, eh?’

‘Yes,’ the headmaster made haste to testify, ‘I’ve no fault to find with him at all. He hasn’t reached quite as high a class as I could wish, but I don’t think that is altogether his own fault. He is certainly very punctual and obedient, and he always takes pains to keep himself clean and tidy.’

Then we took our departure, having first ascertained that Smithers would go that evening (a Friday) to his aunt’s at Fulham and stay there over the week-end.

From the schoolmaster we had learnt the name of the road through which the hut could be approached. Branching from a broad thoroughfare of substantial residences with large and well-kept gardens, it proved to be a new road in which builders were erecting a good class of property. Picking our

way amid the confusion of masonry, bricks and mortar, we presently ducked under a pole raised across the head of the road-cutting, and found ourselves in a large field. But, looking to right and left, I could see no hut.

‘That can’t be it, surely?’ said the mystified inspector; and, following the direction of his glance, I saw, about a hundred feet away, a small area of grey rags bulging out from a straggling hedge.

‘No, that’s not a hut,’ I replied; and when a spirit of curiosity induced him to walk towards the object in question, I felt it was not worth while to follow. But, turning my head a minute later, I found the inspector mysteriously beckoning.

This drew me to his side; and for the next few minutes, breaking the silence only with exclamations of amazement and disgust, we were peering at, and into, the most foul and lamentable scarecrow of a human habitation that it has ever been my fortune to see and smell.

It was about eight feet long, four feet wide, and less than a man’s height at the apex of the sloping roof; though to talk about a

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roof is to employ a word too dignified for the occasion. In that shambling structure some framework of posts must of course have been hitched together, and, indeed, uncouth pieces of supporting timber were visible. But wood played a small part in the construction, forming only the feeble skeleton, which was enveloped by a dirty array of tattered canvas and decayed horse-cloths. Additional details on the top were pieces of rotten linoleum, held in position by stones and odds and ends of rusty iron, not to mention a ham-bone and the stinking relics of a haddock.

But so far I have only spoken of the hut in its exterior aspect. The interior was still more insanitary and abhorrent. To look within was easy enough (apart from the ordeal of meeting foul fumes), for one end of the hut was unscreened. There was no floor, only the rain-sodden earth. Rudely supported on broken boxes was a small and half-rotten mattress, its area nearly equal to that of the hut, its end partly slit open, revealing filthy flock stuffing. A battered biscuit tin, containing empty beer bottles and a candle, was the only visible pantry. With the mattress allotted to the man, his son must have slept

curled up in the little area of wood chips and straw that lay beyond.

Poor little boy ! And I recalled the evidence he had given. Loyal, brave little boy !

We found no one inside or outside the hut. But obviously it had not been long vacated, for near the open end stood a perforated pail in which a coal fire was brightly burning, which, on that damp winter's day, was the one welcome feature of the scene. Moreover, outside the hut was a sawing trestle, a saw, a chopper and the dismembered trunk of a tree, with fresh chips and sawdust on the ground. For the rest, a few yards away, a fifty-gallon zinc cistern stood on end ; and, approaching it, the inspector remarked : ' Well, for my part, I'd much rather sleep in this tank than in that hut '—and he shuddered.

Scanning the large meadow, some way off we saw a tall man ; and we beckoned him as we advanced in his direction. For long he stood irresolute, but as we drew near he came slouching towards us, apparently a prey to vague apprehension and suspicion. White-faced, thin, blear-eyed and in rags, he looked

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only about thirty, but already a dispirited wreck of a man.

This was the beginning of the conversation between the inspector and the stranger—

‘Is your name Smithers?’

‘No, guv’nor; it ain’t me.’

‘Then where is Mr. Smithers?’

‘Dunno, guv’nor. Couldn’t tell you, I’m sure. I see ‘im this mornin’, but where ‘e’s gone I couldn’t say.’

‘Are you *sure* you are not Mr. Smithers?’

‘No—straight, guv’nor, I ain’t—I really ain’t. I’d tell yer if I was. Only I ain’t. ‘E’s a dif’rent man altergether to me, honour bright ‘e is.’

‘There’s been a boy sleeping in that hut, and we want to find out something about it.’

‘Yes, when I see you two standin’ over there, I fancied that’s what you might be arter. But it ain’t nothin’ ter do with me. Not, mind yer, but what I’ve seed the boy there, fer I ‘ave—I’ve seed ‘im there myself. What’s more, I hee’rd there’s bin a bit o’ trouble abart it. But ‘e’s no boy of mine, so it ain’t fer me ter say nothin’.’

Strolling towards the hut, they discussed

the career of Mr. Smithers. It appeared that he was the principal butcher of those parts some years ago, 'but 'e 'ad misforchins, sir, and now 'e's come dahn ter this.' He believed Mr. Smithers did at one time receive a few shillings a week for minding the horses, but that source of income was no longer available.

'Ow 'e manages ter live, same as a good many more, is a fair marvel, seein' 'e 'asn't nothin' ter depend on only what one and another may give 'im. Them builder chaps let 'im 'ave a bite now and agin, or it might be a copper or two, fer they don't like to see any one go altergether wivart. Then the man what owns this field took and give 'im that tree ter cut up fer firewood; and that's where I've bin lendin' 'im a 'and, ter see if we mightn't make a sixpence or two that way.'

'Does he still get drunk?' I asked.

'Lor' bless yer, no! 'E ain't got the 'a'pence fer one thing. Then, too, it 'ud never do in 'is state, seein' 'e's fair eat up with the rheumatics.'

'Living in that hut,' I pointed out, 'is enough to give anybody rheumatism.'

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Couldn't he find some light job that would enable him to get a decent lodging ?'

'E couldn't do no light job. 'E's a lot too fur gone fer that. 'E can't 'ardly walk, let alone work.'

'Don't you think,' asked the inspector, 'you could find him for us ?'

'Why, yes—cert'n'ly I could. You stay 'ere a few minutes and I'll go and fetch 'im'; and with obliging alacrity he took his departure.

Nor was it long before that tall, spare figure returned into view, advancing slowly in the company of a short man enveloped in some sort of dilapidated light coat which, besides being over-voluminous in circumference, reached down to the very ground. And since that short man laboriously waddled, rather than walked, he presented a pathetic aspect not without its tinge of drollery.

As Mr. Smithers gradually drew near, I had ample opportunity to note how some rents in his coat were rudely joined by great, loose stitches that were obviously the work of a singularly inefficient male hand. The eye was also arrested by his feet, which were swathed in coarse and dirty wrappings, and

encased in the wrecks of great boots that had been severely sliced about the uppers, and whereof the soles hung loose.

But, once having had a good view of his face, I looked no more at his feet. It was a wholly unexpected face—clean-shaven, ruddy and chubby. It was not a drink-sodden, brutalized or otherwise repellent face. At a near view, the flesh was seen to be puffy, the skin inflamed ; but the expression was reposeful and not displeasing.

Yet the most remarkable fact about the man proved to be his manners. Raising his old battered hat with gentle courtesy, he gave us the politest of ' Good-afternoons ! ' Only for a brief moment did I suspect him of irony : as his smooth, meek conversation soon proved, a suave bearing was natural to the man. From the sleek, ingratiating family butcher all prosperity had departed, but he retained the politeness.

The path of the investigator proved easy.

' You have had your son Roland sleeping in this hut ? '

' Yes, sir, that is so, and I am so very sorry about it. It is, of course, no proper place for a boy ; but you see, sir, unfortunately

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I am not able to provide him with any other home. My sister-in-law has been very kind, and had him with her a great deal ; but, very naturally, as they have a family of their own, and her husband recently lost his employment, they cannot take Roland altogether, so sometimes he has to come here. It is all very much against my own wishes, sir, but I am quite helpless—I am, indeed, sir.'

'Would you be willing, if it can be arranged that he should go into Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and would you sign an agreement giving permission for him to go to Canada?'

'Why, sir, yes. I'm sure it would be for his benefit. I should only be too grateful to know he is being properly looked after. He's a good boy, sir, and I'm sorry to be so placed that I can't do for him as a father should.'

Many facts had to be elicited and recorded in the large notebook—full Christian name, date of birth, the addresses of relatives, and so forth ; but those matters of routine did not hold my attention. Entering into conversation with the tall man, I found him eager to reveal the circumstances of his own life.

And thus it came about that, when the time arrived for quitting the field, my mind was occupied with two human dramas : that of an ex-butcher who had slipped off the social ladder and now lay meek and helpless in the mire ; and that of a costermonger who, under a financial strain caused by his wife's long illness, had sold, not only his furniture, but also his donkey and barrow, so that now he confronted opportunities of street hawking without the means of profiting by them. Nor could pity be silenced because, as seemed too probable, alcohol had assisted to blast the fortunes of both those men. For even if one could find consolation in the thought that they had earned their punishment, this could not be said of the little ones who were sharing it. And the costermonger had, it appeared, five children.

CHAPTER II

A DUPLICATED BOY

AT Stepney Causeway on the following Tuesday I learnt that, as the outcome of further investigations on which the inspector was engaged, Smithers would probably be admitted to the Homes, and that his aunt at Fulham had undertaken to look after him in the meantime. Accordingly I returned alone to the district, bent on improving my acquaintance with one who seemed so likely to become a Barnardo boy.

Reaching the school at a quarter to four, I strolled to and fro outside, waiting for the time when an army of children should come whooping and careering forth. Nor had I tarried many minutes in a scene that meanwhile was peaceful, when I espied a brisk little figure emerging from the school gates.

Advancing to meet him, I had already begun, 'Do you know whether a boy named Smithers——?' when it became necessary

to break off and add, 'Why, you *are* Smithers !'

'Yes, sir,' he cheerfully admitted, 'and I know you, too. You were with that gentleman the other day who came from Dr. Barnardo's Homes !'

It seemed that, having to go two miles out of his way on an errand for his aunt, he had been let out early by a considerate headmaster. Very cordially did Smithers accept my offer to accompany him on his journey.

'Is it all fixed up, sir, about me going into the Home ?' he lost no time in inquiring.

'It is practically settled, I think.'

'Oh, I'm so glad to hear that, sir,' he exclaimed ; and I noted that, in an obvious spirit of self-congratulation, he was smiting one palm against another, his eyes and mouth puckered into an expression of great complacency ; while almost beneath his breath he chuckled : 'That's all right, Roland Smithers ; now you *will* 'ave a proper chance.'

I looked down in some uncertainty, not quite knowing if the remark were intended for my ears. It was unusual to find a boy addressing himself in so paternal a style.

'You seem pleased ?' I remarked.

'Should think I am! It's took quite a weight off my mind,' he solemnly affirmed. 'And going to Canada, too!' he went on, with a return to his more jubilant manner. 'Oh, that'll just suit me'; and he momentarily interrupted his decorous walking gait to indulge in what seemed to be the first steps of a hornpipe.

I told him that I knew Canada pretty well; and at once he was all attention, eagerly set on gaining information.

'Do they have noospapers in Canada, sir, and L.C.C. trams?'

'They have plenty of newspapers,' I told him, 'and plenty of trams, but not L.C.C. trams'; and they don't call them "trams" at all, but "street cars."

'There's bears there, I suppose?' he went on.

'Yes, but not in the part of the country you will go to.'

'How many cowboys do you think there might be in these days?' he looked up with knitted brows to inquire.

Having confessed my inability to answer that question, I asked Smithers what books he had read about Canada.

'Not any, sir. The only book I ever read right through was a book called *Pilgrim's Progress*. But my uncle has got a lot of books called *Charles Dickens*, and I've just started to read one about Mr. Pickwick. But I don't get on with it very fast. The Red Indians are all done away with now, aren't they, sir?'

I explained that he would very likely see some, though, as in Eastern Canada they dressed like other people, and no longer stained their faces, he would hardly know they were Indians unless some one told him.

Smithers was proving rather a restless companion, for he kept turning his head from one side to the other, as though possessed with a desire to see everybody and everything in the bustling thoroughfares we were traversing. Moreover, the thread of conversation was constantly interrupted by his comments on matters of passing interest.

'But the Indians are dying out quick, aren't they, sir?' he asked; promptly adding: 'That's a fine pair of horses coming along.'

'Very fine,' I agreed; 'but how do you

come to know anything about Canada ? Have you read about it in newspapers ?'

'No, I haven't read anything, but I've heard people talk about Canada, and I've seen moving pictures about it. Once I went——' But, without completing the sentence, he stopped before a newspaper placard and read aloud the words printed thereon : 'Boxtead Evictions—Salvation Army Statement.'

'Do you know what the Salvation Army is ?' I asked.

'Yes,' was his astonishing reply ; 'they go through the streets dressed in white and carrying candles.'

'What standard are you in ?' I was moved to inquire.

'The third,' he replied. 'But then you see, sir,' he went on, shaking his head dismally, 'I've never had a proper chance. Just see how I've been moved about from school to school. I've been regular driven from pillar to post, you may say.'

Once more he was talking about himself with grave compassion, and as though he were regarding his affairs from a detached standpoint. He seemed, indeed, a sort of

duplicated boy—one Roland Smithers being full of solicitude for the other Roland Smithers. But, as I reflected, a lad who had endured hardships with so much silent fortitude was fully entitled to deplore them in the retrospect. Not that Smithers at the moment was disposed to dwell on the dark side of life.

'I'm looking forward to the voyage to Canada!' he declared with enthusiasm.

'Some boys are sea-sick,' I pointed out.

'Oh, well, *I* shan't be,' he promptly asserted. 'When I was at Portsmouth, my uncle took me for a trip on a cruiser, and the Channel was pretty rough, too; but I wasn't ill—not me!' And the tone of confidence was not lacking a note of personal pride. But in the exalted mental frame in which he found himself, Smithers proved capable of a still greater emotional flight.

On my chancing to confess that I did not know the name of the road we were in, and that I had no notion in which direction Fulham lay, the amused lad proceeded to enlighten me in a manner which, if not patronizing, was certainly somewhat superior; though as he lived in the district, and I didn't, my ignorance of the local topography

was perhaps less discreditable than he seemed to think.

However, seeking some practical advantage from the ripe experience of my guide, I desired to be conducted to premises where (now that he had discharged the business with which his aunt had entrusted him) we might devote a half-hour to obtaining an evening meal. Giving immediate and enthusiastic thought to the subject, Smithers was presently standing triumphant before a third-rate coffee shop. That place proved, however, unacceptable to my fastidious tastes, and so I took over the responsibility of discovering a suitable establishment; and it was with an abashed but smiling boy that, five minutes later, I entered a spacious and sweet-smelling confectioner's.

Conscious of the obligations that rest upon a host, I told my young friend that he could order anything he liked, providing it were kept in stock; but when the waitress came to our table, Smithers had not quite made up his mind. He had subjected the establishment to a keen, comprehensive scrutiny; and, on noting that his enamoured gaze was hesitating between a shelf of wedding-cakes

and a glass case piled high with varied sweetmeats, I took upon myself to suggest that a couple of new-laid eggs apiece, with rolls and butter and a pot of tea, might be a good thing to begin with, especially if the young lady would kindly bring us some plain buns to be going on with while the eggs were cooking—a programme which won the ready assent of my guest.

During our meal my attempts to draw him into conversation were not very successful, he being otherwise engaged; though, indeed, when the eggs and rolls had gone the way of the plain buns, my curiosity concerning the career and character of Smithers had temporarily given place to a new interest—an interest belonging to the realms of physiology. I found myself speculating (though perhaps, as the host, it was not quite my place to do so) as to what limit nature might have imposed on the appetite of a healthy boy of twelve. For when Smithers had cleared up the last crumb of the last roll, I asked him if he would care for anything more, and he murmured 'cakes,' whereupon, at my suggestion, the girl brought him two of a sweet variety—and they went. Then, not

without a sense of awe, I bade her try again, and she submitted two in which sugar-icing played a part—with the same result. After that—with some idea of sparing an obliging young lady undue fatigue—I requested her to take a dish and my guest to the window, so that he might make a comprehensive selection of such confectionery as took his fancy. So the meal proceeded, good manners prompting me to keep up a nibbling accompaniment to the hearty efforts of my companion.

While we were thus engaged, I chanced to note the flush of friendly recognition that had come over the face of a well-dressed little boy who had just entered the shop with a lady.

Open-eyed, he gazed at Smithers with respectful interest; and Smithers returned a little offhand smiling nod—obviously by way of indicating how very ordinary an affair it was to be having tea in a swell confectioner's.

'Him?' murmured Smithers when, in a whisper, I asked for information, 'oh, he's one of the boys that go to our school'; and I noticed that Smithers held his head all

the higher for this little incident. Nay, there was quite an elderly air of complacency about the lad when, five minutes later, and with only two tarts remaining on the dish, he brushed the crumbs from his chest and announced that he had finished.

'I've enjoyed it, too,' he heartily added, 'and I'm sure I'm much obliged to you, sir.'

'Well,' I was able to assure him, 'I've enjoyed it quite as much as you have'; and it was on terms of warm cordiality that, after honouring the claims of the establishment, we resumed our journey through the lamplit streets.

The fact is, the more I came to know Smithers, the more I found myself respecting him as a sturdy little fellow with a mind which, if not particularly brilliant, was at any rate well balanced. A keen appreciation of the good things of this life is, I imagine, not often associated, in one so young, with a capacity to endure severe privations without complaining. Indeed, not till one had seen Smithers at table, was it possible fully to realize what he must have suffered on those long days of activity and school work when he had no breakfast and no dinner.

Fain would I gain further clues to the working of his mind ; and a new line of inquiry was suggested by that chance meeting with a schoolmate.

' Did any of the boys know you slept in that hut ? ' I asked.

' No, sir ! ' he quickly replied in an anxious undertone.

' But how did you manage to keep them from knowing ? '

' Well, sir,' replied Smithers, who had suddenly become a downcast little boy, ' I'd play about with them in the streets before going into Mrs. Goodwin's shop, and she always told me to run round to her backyard. Then she'd come to the door and hand me the paper of fish and potatoes when there was no one about ; and I used to go up against the shed and eat it without anybody seeing. After that, I'd get back into the streets again, and play with the other boys until it got dark. One after another, they'd go off to their homes, and when they'd all gone and I was quite alone, I went away to the hut, sir.'

The position grew plainer : keenly as Smithers must have suffered physically, his

chief concern had been to hide his sufferings from the public eye. He found hunger more easy to endure than humiliation. The proud and sensitive boy had striven, at all costs, to retain the respect of his fellows. And here I had a clue to the fact (which had excited remark alike from schoolmaster and school manager) that he was scrupulous over his personal appearance even when residing in the hut; and to have contrived any sort of toilet facilities in that loathsome burrow argued him a resourceful youth indeed.

Clearly, then, the boy had a strong tendency towards right-living—a tendency which his father's environment and example had been powerless to turn aside; and, concluding that such a tendency must necessarily rest on a solid foundation of principle, I fell to wondering by whom that principle had been lovingly implanted in the young mind.

'How old were you, Roland, when your mother died?'

'Only just four, sir.'

Then, drawing my bow at a venture, I asked—

'Did Mrs. Walters, when you lived with her, teach you to say your prayers?'

'Yes, sir,' he cheerfully replied.

'And have you remembered to say them ever since?'

'Yes, sir,' and he looked up into my face with a very frank and friendly expression.

'Well, Roland,' I rattled on, 'I suppose you said your prayers with extra earnestness when you were in the hut?'

But Smithers was silent.

'Well—didn't you?' I persisted, wondering why he did not answer.

But still Smithers was tongue-tied.

'Didn't you say your prayers in the hut?' I inquired.

'No, sir,' he replied with hanging head.

'But why not?'

No answer.

'Won't you tell me?'

Still no answer.

'Come, Roland, old chap'; and I put my hand on his shoulder.

'I was afraid!'

In a whisper, he forced out those words. Then I understood the pathetic predicament of the boy who had been taught to pray out loud. But, incidentally, here was a further revelation of what he had gone through.

Think of that poor little fellow first suffering pangs of hunger—then pangs of shame lest quizzing schoolmates should know of his needs. Think of him sheltering in the Good Samaritan's backyard, and ready, at the first sound of approaching footsteps, to hide away the broken victuals on which by stealth he was breaking his long fast. Then think of him waiting for the darkness that would mercifully hide him from view as he skulked off to the shameful hut—the darkness which, nevertheless, was full of vague terrors for him; so that, after he had crawled across the mattress and slipped into his ugly niche, he must have lain listening in affright at the moaning of the wind and the flapping of the foul curtains that surrounded him. Yes; and it is not difficult to understand that, as the lonely and shivering boy crouched wide-awake in the dark, he would be afraid to utter any word of audible speech.

By way of turning Smithers' thoughts in a new direction, I mentioned the inspector's remark that he would sooner sleep in the cistern than in the hut.

'Well, sir, there's many do sleep in the tank,' came the amazing revelation. 'There's

often one, and sometimes two, and once three were curled up there together.'

'Do you mean three human beings?' for I thought there must be some misunderstanding.

'Yes, sir—three young fellows.'

'But who were they? Hadn't they any homes?'

'I don't know who they'd be—on the tramp, mostly, I suppose. Once I heard two of 'em ask father if they might sleep there, as they had nowhere to go to and no money. Father said yes they might and welcome, and he give 'em a sack to hang over the front of the tank to keep the wet out.'

'Well,' I could not forbear to remark, 'your father had not much accommodation to offer, but at least he offered what he had.'

'Yes, sir, father's always good-natured. One morning when we had a whole loaf, and more than father and I could eat, he went and routed a lad out of the tank, and made him come and 'ave some, too.'

'Good! But that was rather unusual, wasn't it—a whole loaf!'

'Yes, sir, that was one of the good days. Sometimes there was only a slice between us,

and father would 'ave half and give me half. If there was nothing to eat, and he had a few coppers, he'd give me tuppence to go and buy some breakfast with. Then there were the days,' Smithers added, lowering his voice, 'when there was no bread and no money.'

After a pause, he added in a gloomy reverie—

'And to think what a lovely business my father used to 'ave! There wasn't another butcher doing so much trade for miles!'

Judging, however, that we had now talked enough of the past, I reverted to Canada, endeavouring to afford Smithers some conception of the country whither in all probability he would be going; and it was from a happy and enthusiastic boy that I parted, half an hour later, in his aunt's little general shop at Fulham.

CHAPTER III

SMITHERS AT STEPNEY

TWO days later, I learnt that the inspector had handed in his completed report, and that Smithers had been found eligible for admission into Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Moreover, I was informed that he would probably arrive at Stepney on the following Thursday afternoon.

Accordingly, on the day in question, I called at No. 10 in the Causeway—the house where new-comers are received.

'Smithers?' echoed the bustling matron. 'Yes, I think I've a boy of that name. But the doctor is here, and I am very fully occupied at the moment. Perhaps you won't mind waiting in the parlour for a quarter of an hour.'

Nor had I been in that cosy apartment ten minutes when the door opened, and in burst a queer dancing apparition of pink chest and

knickerbockers. It proved to be Smithers—Smithers stripped to the waist and in high spirits.

'I've passed the doctor!' he cried. 'Isn't that all right? Now I'm safe for Canada'; and he proceeded to dance about the room.

'Steady! Steady!' I suggested. 'And suppose you come to the fire, and put an anti-macassar or something over you. How did you know I was in here?'

'I was third boy in the row,' he breathlessly explained, 'and, as soon as the doctor had done with me, the lady came up and told me there was a gentleman in the parlour and I could go and see him. I guessed who it was. But isn't it fine me passing the doctor so easily?'

'It's a good beginning,' I admitted; 'but you will have some more medical examinations to go through yet. Canada is very particular about its future citizens.'

But our conversation was cut short by the return of the matron, who, after bidding the youth run away and dress, said she had glanced at the medical register and seen that my protégé was certified to be well-developed

and healthy, the only blemishes noted by the doctor being 'slight catarrh' and 'vermin bitten.'

Observing that the latter item came as a shock to my inexperience, she added—

'Oh, that of course is very often the case—poor little fellows! But happily it is only a temporary trouble.'

Little opportunity was given me, however, to ponder the horrid fact now revealed as a part of Smithers' recent tribulations; for the matron conducted me into another room, where I found some twenty happy boys whose tongues were freely wagging. One animated cluster—including Smithers—were asquat a long form, busily engaged in fitting themselves with boots chosen from a collection heaped on the floor. At a trestle table was gathered another group, several of whom were shouting and laughing while they angled for metal fish with tiny rods baited with magnetism. Yet a third contingent, composed of juveniles, sat upon the floor before the hearth, solemnly engaged with Noah's arks, bricks and soldiers.

The nimble and alert matron, while finding time to see fair play on the hearthrug, and to settle heated controversies that arose among

the anglers, devoted her chief energies to assisting Smithers and his companions make a judicious selection of boots. It was not long, indeed, before she had them all shod to her satisfaction, whereupon she lined them up in marching order, and, summoning a boy who had been posted in the passage, bade him conduct them to the clothing store.

I followed that little procession out into the street and round to a side door of the main building ; and soon I was witnessing a process that visibly transformed those new-comers into Barnardo boys. We had assembled in a narrow lofty apartment of which each wall was a honeycomb of spacious pigeonholes stuffed with wearing apparel ticketed according to sizes ; and an expert attendant, after subjecting the youths to close scrutiny, took down shirts, trousers, tunics and caps suitable to their individual needs. Then Smithers and his colleagues were bidden retire behind a long counter and change into their uniforms.

It proved a somewhat protracted business : and there was much smothered laughter and self-conscious grinning on the part of youngsters who now for the first time were donning trousers, and trousers of a smart and military

appearance. When they had put on their caps and buttoned their crimson-braided tunics, behold a company of little soldiers! Smithers was obviously much gratified by his uniform, even though he came to me and complained that the stiff cloth collar was chafing his chin.

'And here, my lads, are your marching orders,' exclaimed the attendant, as he received a paper from the hands of a juvenile messenger. 'Ah! they are all for Mr. Armitage, I see. Here, Jackie!'—calling to a thoughtful-looking youngster who stood sentinel at the door—'take these boys over to Leopold House.'

Jackie raised his hand and led the way; that little squad of brand-new Barnardo boys fell in behind him; and I brought up the rear. Jackie led us across the road and through a number of side streets. He did not enforce any very rigid discipline, and so we were soon advancing in a broken formation of twos and threes.

Naturally, Smithers and I walked together, and I was delighted to notice that he was in high spirits, as was shown by his occasional observations, uttered somewhat jerkily as,

turning to right and left, he scrutinized the new world in which he found himself.

'Canada's getting nearer every day now, sir, isn't it? . . . These clothes feel pretty warm. It's good thick stuff and no mistake. . . . But don't all the houses look dirty? This part of London isn't as nice as Fulham. . . .'

So he prattled on; and I endeavoured to return suitable replies, though as a matter of fact I was giving Smithers a divided attention. He was walking on my right, and another boy, distinctly smaller, was walking abreast of me on the other side. That other boy did not say anything, but every now and then, when I looked down at him, he looked up at me, and with as bright and frank a smile as ever I saw on a youthful face. And yet those words do not fully describe that smile. It was a smile of unqualified trust, and therefore very welcome and flattering.

After he had smiled like that three times, I found myself patting him on the shoulder and remarking—

'Well, you seem a very happy little boy.' Whereupon he smiled yet a fourth time.

'And what is your name?' I asked.

'Please, sir—Douglas, sir.'

'Any other name besides Douglas?'

'Please, sir—Alfred Douglas, sir.'

His face was all aglow with animation as, in a thin little voice, he gave me that information.

'And are you glad you are a Barnardo boy?' I inquired.

'Please, sir—yes, sir.'

I asked him several other questions, to which he returned the same reply. Master Douglas was clearly not in a loquacious mood. But he went on smiling in that quiet, confidential way of his.

'Here's Leopold,' exclaimed our guide as, having reached the Burdett Road, we stood before premises which merely suggested a double-fronted private house at the end of a terrace. We went up the steps, and promptly the door was opened from within by a Barnardo boy. We streamed into the hall, where we saw several more Barnardo boys. We advanced up the hall, and beheld a stream of Barnardo boys racing along a passage, with two rooms on ahead stuffed full of Barnardo boys; and, looking through a window, I saw a multitude of Barnardo boys careering about

a large open-air playground, while a huge building beyond afforded glimpses of still more Barnardo boys. In a word, the place was alive with Barnardo boys and resounded with their shouts and laughter.

No one has ever seen, or ever will see, all the Barnardo boys. But at that moment I formed a conception of their numbers. For it came upon me with almost startling force that the swarming hundreds around me were, after all, but an insignificant fraction of the whole, since within a few minutes' walk there were other Barnardo Homes which also contained their swarming hundreds, and that they were but a few of the numerous Barnardo Homes dotted throughout the United Kingdom—aye, and that all the hundreds in all those Homes were still less than half of the total, since an even greater number were scattered among thousands of English cottages and Canadian farms. And to think that every single one of those Barnardo children had, like Smithers, been rescued from want, unhappiness and danger.

Meanwhile, what had become of Smithers, Douglas and the other new arrivals? I merely had a vague impression that they had

been swallowed up. That handful of boys had merged with the hundreds of boys. I found myself wondering how in the world one was ever to find them again. It was as though twelve minnows had been released in a reservoir of fish.

But Leopold House was to be revealed as an organism which, if huge and complex, was nevertheless highly systematized and under the control of a master mind.

A bugle sounded, and behold! from all quarters the Barnardo boys were running helter-skelter to the playground. From a first-floor window I was looking down upon the animated assembly, which at first had the aspect of an unruly mob of youngsters. But see! the mob was resolving itself into an exact formation of boys standing shoulder to shoulder in double columns. When the last unit had run to his place, all were still and silent. Scanning that stationary regiment, my astonished eyes chanced upon Smithers, standing in the ranks like an old-timer.

Turning round, I found myself in the presence of the master mind.

Mr. Armitage proved to be a quiet man, who spoke with deliberation, in a low voice, gently smiling.

'Now they will go in to tea,' he murmured ; and at once the front column wheeled and was heading for the dining hall ; then the second column also wheeled and attached itself to the rear of its predecessor, as in turn did the third and fourth and all the others, each becoming a new section of the orderly procession of boys which was moving through the doorway. Nor had many seconds elapsed before the playground was deserted, and not a Barnardo boy could I anywhere see.

'Hark !' said Mr. Armitage ; and I heard the muffled musical cadences of several hundred little voices raised in praise.

Afterwards he took me down to the dining hall. I gazed upon a sea of little pink faces and close-cropped heads, that host of boys sitting in silence at row upon row of narrow tables. Yet they were not quite silent. There was the strange sound of all those little jaws munching in unison.

'I wonder where my boy is !' I chanced to remark, feeling how futile a search would be.

'When did he come in ?' my companion asked.

'This afternoon.'

Mr. Armitage directed a glance to right and

left as he walked down the central gangway. Stopping, he pointed to a table and said—

‘Very likely he is here’; and, looking along the line of feasters, sure enough I saw Smithers, who grinned as he caught my eye.

A little further down, on the other side of the table, my glance encountered the bright smile of Douglas.

‘How did you know the new boys were here?’ I asked Mr. Armitage.

‘When you see a uniform that is quite bright and free from creases’—was his smiling explanation—‘you may be pretty sure the wearer has only just put it on.’

Then he took me to the parlour and introduced me to his sister, and we had tea together. Time was when Mr. and Miss Armitage served as missionaries on the east coast of Africa. To-day, I think, they find fuller scope for their zeal in fathering and mothering the huge, happy family at Leopold House.

After tea, Mr. Armitage and I went back to the room overlooking the playground. Once more that apartment, the passages, and all other visible parts of the premises, were full of active, talkative and exuberant youngsters. Nor, I observed, did the presence of my com-

panion serve as a damper on youthful spirits, or cause any appreciable lessening of the juvenile clamour. On the contrary, many boys gathered around him with eager petitions.

'Now, one at a time,' said the unruffled governor. 'What do you want, Green?'

'Please, sir, can I have a stamp to write to my mother?'

'Certainly. And what is your trouble, Williams?'

'Please, sir, my brother is going to be at Stepney to-night, so can I go and see him?'

'You are rather young to be out at night; though just this once I won't say no. But mind you are back 'y eight. . . . Ah! Robins, I'm afraid I know what you have come for. What was it this time?'

'Talking at table, sir.' And gravely the delinquent held out his open palm.

Having smitten the youth with a short cane, but without vigour, Mr. Armitage laid a hand on his shoulder and said: 'Try and not let it happen again, Robins.'

Another boy wanted to know if he could play football in the park next morning.

'Yes, of course you can,' was the answer.

'I've inflated a couple of balls, and I'd like to see two good teams go out.'

One or two boys belonged to the band, and were eager for information about the practices. Still other boys desired addresses, for which Mr. Armitage had to seek in books that lay on a desk. Every applicant approached him unabashed, but in a respectful manner that reflected esteem. Every applicant received a quiet, sympathetic individual attention.

It was very interesting to follow the working of a mind which was capable of doing many things, if not simultaneously, at any rate concurrently—a mind that could meet ceaseless distractions with smiling urbanity. For, the arrival of the petitioners having become somewhat intermittent, Mr. Armitage had already set down to revise a list of names occupying several sheets of foolscap. It seemed quite easy for him to pursue that revision while revealing for my benefit the significance of the list; neither process suffering great hindrance from the obligation under which he lay, every now and then, to sell one boy a soiled tennis ball for twopence, and explain to another what trams he should

take when going to see his grandmother at Hackney.

'Here is my first list of boys for Canada,' said Mr. Armitage, 'and every day it gets altered. This constant chopping and changing will be going on for two months. The selection of emigrants is always a slow and troublesome business. Of course, the question of a boy's health has first to be considered, for Canada takes care to receive only the physically fit. We have to look up all the records to see whether there have been any serious illnesses. We have even to extend our investigations to the parents, for if they died of consumption, or were insane, the boy is ineligible. Of course, too, he must pass a special medical examination, and if the doctor discovers any temporary blemish he must come up later for re-examination. Before his name was put down, his own consent had to be secured; then it often happens that the consent of a parent or other relative must be sought. Sometimes, too, it will happen that a boy's name must be taken off the list because it is found that he has a brother or sister going out with a later party, and it is naturally desired to send them both together. And

all these little troubles,' he added, 'come on the top of the biggest trouble of all—the loss of our best boys. For of course we have to pass upon ourselves a self-denying ordinance, and present Canada with our most useful material, including some of our carefully-trained musicians and the lads who have become specially qualified for work in the Home. At this moment our cook is in despair, because I have put her two expert kitchen boys on the list. But of course, as I have constantly to be pointing out, the Home exists for the boys, not the boys for the Home.'

Before leaving, I was destined to have a further glimpse of the inside working of Leopold House. Having explained that it was his custom, every evening, to interview the day's new arrivals, Mr. Armitage summoned one of the boys who served as his messengers, and handed the saluting youth a list of names. Then Mr. Armitage moved into his inner office, whither I had permission to follow him.

Nor had we long to wait before the door re-opened and in filed a little troupe of boys in bright uniforms. Smithers, carrying his

head high, was at once conspicuous, and I recognized other faces as belonging to the party I had accompanied from Stepney. But, as the door closed, my attention was arrested by the fact that one boy in the row was hanging his head and sobbing in unrestrained convulsions.

There seemed something familiar in the aspect of that piteous little lad, and the next minute, stooping over him, I had identified—Douglas! It was a discovery that found me wholly unprepared, and I am afraid the confession must be made that it gave me a quite unreasonable shock. But the fact is I had not yet begun to think of Douglas as a boy—he had been to me merely a smile. And such a smile! It had been eloquent of happiness—of happiness unalloyed.

What a different Douglas my amazed eyes now saw—his face all puckered with grief and running with tears, his little chest heaving. With the memory of that smile in my mind, I could only conceive that he had just suffered some hurt—perhaps rough usage from one of the boys.

‘Why, my poor little chap, whatever is the matter?’ I exclaimed, striving to console

the sufferer; and of course my manner revealed anxiety as well as sympathy.

Mr. Armitage touched me on the shoulder and whispered—

‘It’s nothing unusual—they are often like this at first.’

But I was not disposed to heed the diagnosis of experience. I felt that general rules would not apply. Mr. Armitage had not seen the smile and I had.

So I persisted in my efforts to stay the tears and learn why they were flowing. And presently, raising his head, Douglas looked at me through swimming eyes as he gradually recovered composure.

‘What was it? Tell me what was the matter.’

But the little wet face wore a blank expression, and the lips stayed closed.

Still I coaxed and coaxed. And at last he spoke.

‘I want my mother.’

And those words were not uttered in any tone of protest or appeal. They were just a little helpless wail of explanation.

The appointed proceedings then took place. Each boy was separately questioned by Mr.

Armitage—questioned in an easy and reassuring manner as to name, age and birthday ; the inquiries being apparently designed, not so much to extract information, as to establish relations of confidence and friendship. And Douglas, when it came to his turn, was able to acquit himself calmly and with credit.

But ringing in my mind as I left Leopold House were those pitiful whispered words—
'I want my mother.' And they prompted the haunting thought : if Douglas wanted his mother, how much more must Douglas's mother be wanting him.

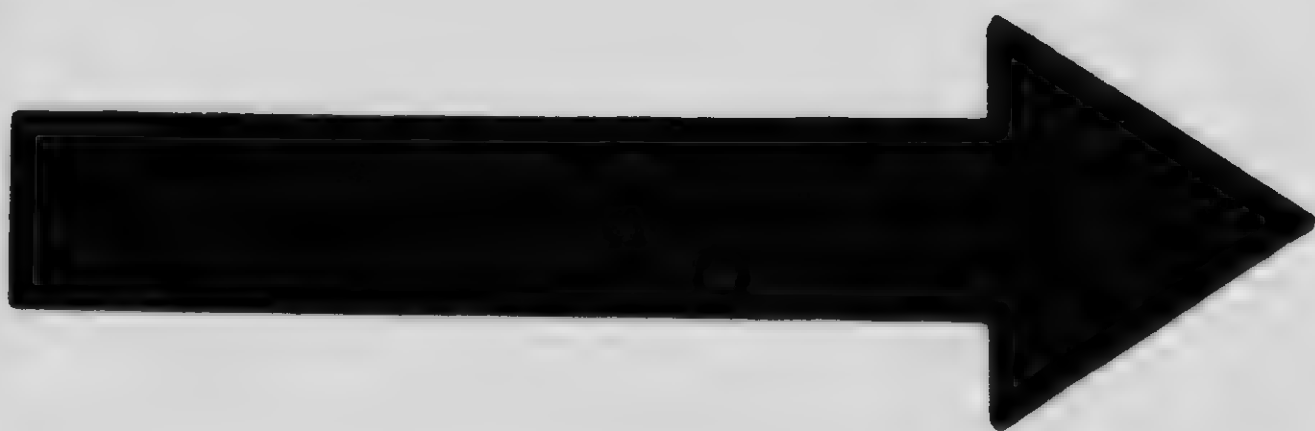
CHAPTER IV

' I WANT MY MOTHER '

NEXT morning my mind held a picture—
a picture of the imagination—which
would not fade. I saw a woman weeping,
and bowed in helpless grief, because she had
been forced to part with a little boy—a little
boy whose lost smile had left her life in
darkness.

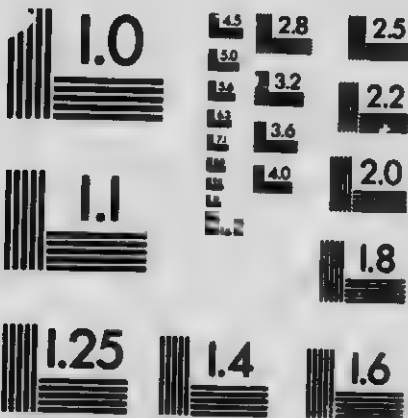
Bent on making inquiries, I went to Stepney Causeway and visited that part of the premises which resembles the counting house of a large business establishment—as, indeed, it is. Through glass panels you get glimpses of an army of officials seated at desks, poring over ledgers. Here and there departmental heads are seen dictating correspondence to shorthand clerks. The air is tense with the click of typewriters.

An uninstructed stranger would never doubt that these were the offices of a dividend-



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earning company trading in some class of commodities. So they are, the commodities being mortal lives and immortal souls. The company is certainly run for profit, and pays a daily dividend of a hundred thousand per cent., not in cash but in something better—human happiness. It is a company that owns a great many factories throughout the country—factories where citizens are made. It is a company that does a large export business, sending every year three shiploads of its finished products to Canada.

The question I wanted to ask concerned an infinitesimal fraction of the business occupying the large and busy staff before me. To be precise, that business ranged itself under nine thousand separate heads, and the question I wanted to ask concerned only one of those heads. But quickly was I put in touch with an official able and eager to serve my needs.

‘What sort of woman,’ I asked him, ‘is the mother of Alfred Douglas, a little boy admitted yesterday?’

‘Here are all the facts,’ he replied, producing the voluminous report put in by the inspector who had investigated the case.

Reading it, I learnt that, five years previ-

ously, Alfred's mother was deserted by Alfred's father, who left her penniless, with two young children on her hands. The brave and devoted woman had ever since then fought the world alone. Though by no means strong, she had worked without ceasing at the wash-tub, and, being reliable, steady and respectable, she had for three years held her present position in a laundry. Her earnings averaged 7s. 6d. a week, out of which she had to pay 3s. as the rent of her room. So there remained only 4s. 6d. a week for defraying the cost of feeding and clothing her son and daughter and herself.

It was the old familiar story of a mother's heroic fight with Poverty—the story which, I had learnt, lies behind thousands upon thousands of the admissions to Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Observe, in that struggle Time is the ally of Poverty, and wars against the woman. The children are ever growing, and as they grow they need more food and more clothes. So nearer and nearer draws the day when she can no longer postpone an awful decision—whether she shall retain her loved ones and see them droop for want of adequate nourishment, or whether she shall

suffer the wrench of surrendering them to an institution where they will be properly fed.

Oh, most piteous is the plight of the unhappy mother, tortured by conflicting impulses of love—a woman reduced to two alternatives, at each of which she shudders. Cheerfully she submits to semi-starvation, that her meagre resources may be the more fully available for her little ones; but this merely delays the evil day. Inevitably the time comes when the mother chooses the course which involves the heaviest personal sacrifice.

Mrs. Douglas—I learnt from the inspector's report—had at last brought herself to see that, for Alfred's sake, she must part with Alfred to Dr. Barnardo's Homes; her one compensation being that more bread and butter would be available for her little daughter Milly.

I had heard enough. The picture now lived in my mind with a new vividness, as the image of a fear confirmed. I made up my mind to visit Mrs. Douglas (whose address in Croydon I had noted), and see to what extent fancy was confirmed by fact.

The day, however, provided other obligations; and thus evening was well advanced

before the train took me to my southerly destination.

The house proved to be one of a humble terrace in a little back street that wore an unmistakable aspect of poverty. I knocked at the door, which was opened by a stout woman who, with more of suspicion than welcome in her manner, demanded to know what I wanted.

'Does Mrs. Douglas live here?' I asked.

'Mrs. Douglas?' was the non-committal reply of the woman, as she advanced and planted her bulk across the doorway, as an effectual bar to admission. 'What do you want with *her*?'

As best I could I explained that, on the previous afternoon, I had happened to be present when Alfred Douglas was admitted to Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and that, as he had spoken to me about his mother, I thought I should like to see her.

'Well, it's right enough she rents one of my upstairs rooms,' conceded the woman; and, as her tone was now more friendly, I inferred that the stranger had come creditably through the searching scrutiny to which, while he was offering the foregoing explanations, she had

subjected him. 'I knew she'd had her troubles, poor thing,' continued the woman, 'same as a good many more, and always had the name for being a respectable, hard-working woman—which I'm bound to say I've never found her to be anything else—and so when she came to me, seven months ago last Tuesday, and asked me if I'd kindly let her have one of my rooms, as they were pulling down the last house where she was, to build shops, and she'd been hunting all about and couldn't find another place to suit her—well, to make a long story short, I couldn't help but feel sorry for the woman, and I said yes, she could have one of my upstairs rooms at the back, only there was one thing she must understand from the start—the rent must be paid, and paid regular; for, as she told me quite straightforward, when I asked the question, what she'd got in the way of furniture didn't amount to more than a few pence if you came to sell it (which turned out true enough, as the whole lot didn't half fill a small barrow), so I told her I'd got no security there for my rent, and the money would have to be paid up sharp every Saturday, and no waiting; seeing as I'd got to pay my way like other people,

with a family to provide for and all, and how could she expect me to keep straight with the landlord, and one thing and another, if the rent wasn't coming in for my rooms ?'

'And has she proved a satisfactory tenant ?' I found an opportunity to ask.

'Oh, yes—I've no fault to find. Now and again she'll beg me just to let two shillings or eighteenpence stand over till next week, seeing she'd had something to buy that she hadn't reckoned for. But it doesn't often happen, and she always clears it off on the Saturday after, so I never make a bother, for, between ourselves, I know that poor thing has got just about all a mortal woman can do to scrape and struggle along—and her health is not too grand, all along of not having proper food, and worrying and fretting about the children, and about that beauty of a husband she's got——'

'You know him ?' I interrupted her to ask.

'I know *of* him,' came the indignant explanation, 'and that's all I want to know. And I've seen him stop and abuse her in the street. A fair scamp—that's what he is; and never paid her a penny ever since he left her five years ago, when he went to live with

another woman (and a nice beauty *she* must be !). Got two children by that other woman, he has ; and even then can't leave his wife alone, but used to wait for her when she came out of the laundry—the wretch !—and call her all manner of names and nearly frighten the life out of her. I tell you, it made my blood fairly boil, she keeping herself so respectable, with never a word of grumble, and slave, slave all day long—just to keep a roof over her children's heads and something in their bellies, when all the time it was as much his place to be caring for 'em. But there ! he can't do her any more mischief now, that's one comfort, for he's laying abed all swollen up with dropsy, and can't recover, the doctor says.'

Suddenly confronted by that shameful story of a fallen man, I knew not what to say ; for the tribulations of souls on earth hold a significance which the finite intellect cannot measure. Merely, therefore, did I falter : 'How awful ! How hopeless !'

'Yes, awful it is,' agreed the woman, who, though she still made no offer of admitting me, had by this time grown to be quite friendly and confidential in her manner. 'Just think

of those other children—poor little innocents!’ she added. ‘A nice sort of bringing up they’re likely to have with that woman!’

Certainly her words very vividly brought to my mind new subjects for concern and sympathy. It is ever so. Look intimately at one case of destitution in our congested population, and new vistas of suffering humanity—of poor helpless mortals needing the helping hand—will open before you. It is a strange law that governs the outsider’s vision. Hurry through life preoccupied with your own little troubles and affairs, and you may rub shoulders with heart-broken poverty and know nothing of its existence. But pause at one case, and straightway others are revealed all round you.

‘Ah, yes,’ I agreed, ‘perhaps those other children are even more in need of being taken in hand than Alfred was. By the way, he seems a nice boy.’

‘Yes, both him and Milly are good enough children. I will say that for Mrs. Douglas, she’s brought up them two respectable according to her means. I won’t say they mayn’t be a bit mischeevous now and again, and run around laughing and a-carrying on ;

but that's no more than child nature all the world over. They don't take after their father, that's one good thing; it's their mother they favour in looks, and other ways besides, seeing she came of a very respectable family. It's the same with her eldest boy, Joe; but it's the father who's had him, ever since he came to be useful and able to earn a few shillings.'

'I should like to see Mrs. Douglas,' I said.

'She won't be back for nearly two hours,' explained the woman. 'Wednesday is one of the nights when she works late, and she doesn't get away till ten when they're busy at the laundry.'

This, as I pointed out, was somewhat unfortunate from my point of view, since I lived forty miles on the other side of London, and so must not much longer prolong my presence in Croydon; and I was still cogitating what, in the circumstances, was best to be done when a daughter of my companion emerged from a parlour and, explaining that she had been an involuntary listener to our conversation, offered a practical suggestion to solve my difficulty.

'The laundry,' she said, 'is only a few

minutes' walk from here, and if you'd care to go I'll be quite pleased to take you round and ask Mrs. Douglas to come out for a few minutes. I'm sure she'd be very disappointed to miss seeing you.'

This offer I gratefully accepted, and, as the young woman was already arrayed in her outdoor attire, we straightway set off on our mission.

The landlady's daughter proved to have a very earnest mind, full of sympathy with human suffering and zeal for its amelioration; her conversation indicating fuller opportunities of education than had been enjoyed by her mother.

'I'm so glad,' she burst forth impetuously, 'that Alfred is going into Dr. Barnardo's Homes, where the little chap will have plenty of good food and a proper chance in life. Of course it's a terrible wrench for his mother, for she's quite wrapped up in her children; and what makes her cry most is the thought of his going to Canada, and perhaps she'll never see him again. But, as I tell her, what chance is there for him in this country? And what chance is there for all the thousands of other children who are growing up to-day?

It's awful to think about. And, as I was saying to Mrs. Douglas, it's Alfred's future she has got to think about. Over here the men can't get enough work to feed their families properly ; but over in Canada everybody can earn good wages.'

It surprised me to hear a Croydon girl, who was presumably untravelled, so clearly state a truth that is not yet common property ; and I could not help asking—

'Yes, but how do you happen to know that ?'

'Oh, I've read a good deal about Canada,' replied the landlady's daughter. 'You see, I once had the chance of going there myself. I used to work for a lady who went across, and she offered to take me, and I wanted to go. At first I thought I should be able to persuade mother, and I devoured all the books about Canada that I could get hold of ; only in the end it was all no good, as mother simply would not consent.'

I advised her not to abandon the hope of crossing the Atlantic some day.

'Oh, yes,' she said, 'I'm resigned now. It would be rather selfish, as I happen to be the eldest girl, and mother does not want to lose

me. But I'm so awfully pleased about Alfred. And it is such a great pity his brother can't go too. Joe is one of the nicest boys you ever saw. To look at him, and judging by his ways, you wouldn't know he wasn't a little born gentleman. I do call it a shame, because where he is now he's bound to go downhill; he can't help himself; but, with any chance at all, Joe would turn out a fine man. And to think of all the hundreds of other nice boys about here running to waste, you may say! Wouldn't I just like to sweep them all up and pack them off to Canada!'

But at this point conversation was interrupted by our arrival at the laundry.

Tapping at a side door, the landlady's daughter asked to see Mrs. Douglas.

It was a tall, spare and flustered woman who emerged from the perspective of white draperies and steam.

'What is it? Whatever is the matter?' she wailed as her precipitate footsteps carried her right through the doorway to where we stood waiting on the pavement.

'Now, it's all right. It's nothing at all, Mrs. Douglas,' came the prompt reassurance from the landlady's daughter. 'Only this

gentleman comes from Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and as he hasn't long to wait I brought him round.'

'Oh, he's not ill, sir? There's nothing happened? He's not——' came the hysterical flow of words, as her overwrought mind became a prey to new misgivings.

'No, no, no,' I laughed. 'He's all right.'

'I was afraid there might be something wrong,' gasped the anxious woman. 'Oh dear, oh dear,' she added, on suddenly becoming afflicted with simpering bashfulness, 'here am I up to my elbows in suds! Whatever will you think of me!' and in a panic she proceeded to dry her hands on her apron—a process she interrupted to remark, with a tremulous laugh, 'Poor little fellow! it must seem strange to him at first. I'm sure he misses me, sir, doesn't he?'

And the plaintive eagerness in her tone prompted me to tell her that, though the young gentleman looked very proud and happy in his new uniform during the afternoon, there were tears in the evening, and he had said: 'I want my mother.'

'Oh, yes, I was sure he would!' cried

Mrs. Douglas in a sort of tearful triumph. 'There, now! Just fancy him saying that! Poor little Alf!' and it was manifest that gratification held the mastery in her conflict of emotions.

Not without misgivings, I introduced the subject of Canada, remarking that, if Alfred were included in the party of Barnardo children sailing on March 14, it would be possible for me to keep a friendly eye on him, as I should be accompanying that party across the sea.

At once the little gleam of gladness had passed, and Mrs. Douglas was in a paroxysm of dismay.

'Oh, no, sir,' she pleaded, 'don't let him go yet! I couldn't bear it. March! Oh, that's dreadfully close'; and she shuddered. 'I don't want him to go at all,' she added, in a torrent of words and sobs. 'It's so hard never to see him any more. But perhaps—later on—yes, it won't seem so hard then. Oh, but I want him back, sir! I would have gone to fetch him yesterday, sir, only—I hadn't the money, and I mustn't leave my work. Don't take him, sir—oh, don't take him. I want to see him sometimes. But

when he goes to Canada I shall never see him again.'

Promptly I told her that Alfred would certainly not go with the March party against her wishes, and that, after what she had said, I would not press the matter any further—assurances that brought a smile of gratitude to the worn, white and tear-splashed face.

'By the bye, Mrs. Douglas,' I said, speaking on a sudden impulse, 'why don't you go to Canada, too?'

'Yes, fancy *me* going!' she simpered.

'Why not?' I asked.

'What! *Me?*' she gasped. 'Oh, of course not,' and she was obviously overwhelmed with a sense of her own shortcomings. 'Why, I haven't the money! And if I had, they wouldn't let *me* go.'

'I don't see why not. You have no serious disease, have you?'

'No, sir,' she replied, staring at me in helpless bewilderment. 'But,' apologetically, 'my health isn't good, and I'm not strong, and—and they wouldn't pass *me*, sir.'

'You are feeling tired and limp and run down,' I diagnosed, 'and your nerves are a bit unstrung. There are probably two rea-

sons for this : you don’t have enough nourishment, and you worry too much.’

‘Yes, I do worry,’ came the meek confession. ‘I’m always worrying, what with Alf going, and my husband. Only, there ! He lays a-dying, so it’s not the time to talk now of the way he’s behaved.’

‘Would you *like* to go to Canada ?’ I asked.

‘Like to ? Yes ! Wouldn’t I ? It’s what I often used to think of, my brother being over there and all. Only it’s too late thinking about it now—I know that.’

I, however, was not so sure.

‘If you’ll promise to try and stop worrying from this moment,’ was my stipulation, ‘we’ll see if the Salvation Army won’t consent to emigrate you and Milly at about the same time that the Homes send Alfred out.’

And the end of it was that Mrs. Douglas went hurrying back to her washing with a smiling face and springy footsteps.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST WEEK

HAVING communicated with the Salvation Army's Emigration Department, and easily engaged its interest on behalf of a heroic mother and her little girl, I lost no time in revisiting Leopold House, intent on learning how my two boys were adapting themselves to their new conditions.

Standing at the head of the iron stairway, I found the playground a surging sea of lads all dressed alike; and once more my mind was perplexed by the problem, How among so many could I locate Smithers and Douglas? To call out their names would clearly be unavailing, since, without a few preliminary blasts on a trombone or similar wind instrument, I could not hope to arrest the din of whooping, laughter, cries and whistling, and so prepare the way for my voice to be heard. However, the task of finding

them must at any rate be attempted, and therefore, while descending the steps, I began by directing a random gaze over the near margin of that human maelstrom.

How completely at fault was my judgment I only realized when, on reaching the foot of the stairway and feeling a tug at my coat, I turned to behold the beaming face of Smithers, at whose side stood Douglas, eagerly awaiting recognition. And so, as might have been foreseen, I found them by the simple process of their finding me ; for, if they were invisible in a multitude, I had loomed up conspicuously enough.

For some minutes our relations, if marked by mutual cordiality, consisted of putting questions that could not be heard and returning answers that were equally inaudible. So we threaded our way through the throng, and, passing into a building, proceeded along a corridor until, entering a deserted apartment, we found our opportunity for a quiet chat.

The first thing I noticed about them was that their hair had been cut after the mode that prevailed in the Home—a close crop save for the tuft left as an embellishment over the brow—this transformation serving

to emphasize the smart personal appearance produced by their uniforms. But, when the first excitement of our meeting had passed, I found that their spirits were somewhat depressed.

'He does nothing but stand in the playground crying,' Smithers dolefully explained, in allusion to Douglas, who looked at me with blinking confirmatory eyes.

'Well,' I urged, 'you must try and cheer him up.'

'Yea, but seeing him keep on crying,' Smithers added helplessly, 'sets me off, too.'

And thus I was reminded that, though we are apt to think little boys laugh their thoughtless way through life, they are capable of poignant griefs, and are the most sensitive of sentimentalists when it comes to any severance of home ties.

'I dunno what he keeps crying for,' Smithers went on. 'He says he wants his mother, and I fancy it makes him not care about going to Canada. That's not like me, sir! The sooner I'm off to Canada, the better I'll be satisfied.'

'Now, look here, Alfred,' I said, 'I've been to see your mother, and if you go to Canada,

she will go, too, and so will Milly.' At which the surprised little fellow gave me one of his bright smiles, which seemed to derive an added sparkle from the moisture in his eyes. 'There! won't that be fine? Now you must promise to try and not cry any more.' And, still smiling, he eagerly nodded assent, murmuring—

'Please, sir—yes.'

'How do you like your meals here?' I asked them.

'They're all right,' Smithers gravely replied. 'You get plenty. It's plain food, though; but we can't expect more than that, can we, sir, seeing there are so many. My! it must cost a lot of money to feed all us boys!'

'Please, sir,' confided Douglas, with increased animation, 'we had porridge this morning!'

'We had meat for dinner yesterday,' Smithers recalled. 'But to-day it was cheese.'

'And how do you get on with the other boys?'

'Please, sir,' Douglas hastened to relate, as he pulled a long face, 'a boy punched me.'

'Oh, well, I don't suppose he hurt you.'

'Please, sir—he *did*, sir.'

'They're a bit rough, the big boys are,' Smithers gloomily certified. 'I don't like those sort of pictures'; and, following the direction of his gaze, I perceived that this abrupt digression referred to a coloured print, hanging framed on the wall, which represented a fireman in the act of emerging from a burning house with a rescued child in his arms. 'They always make me afraid it's going to happen really,' and he shuddered.

Though I pooh-poohed his fears as foolish, it was pathetic to find a sturdy, prosaic boy like Smithers—who was by no means of a high-strung and imaginative temperament—allowing rein to timid fancies. Nor could I doubt that here was proof of the extent to which his sojourn in the lonely hut had demoralized his nerves.

'What makes the time hang so heavy,' he was presently deploring, 'is having nothing to do only stand about; for I don't feel as if I want to play much. Mr. Armitage said we needn't go to school for a day or two, but I'll ask him to-morrow if I can't go at once. That'll help to make the time go quicker. Anything is better than standing about with

nothing to do, only to keep on thinking about everything all over again. It makes me miserable, sir.'

And so it came about that, when the bugle sounded for tea, I parted from two little boys who were by no means in normal spirits.

'The first week is a trying time for many of them,' Mr. Armitage was presently explaining to me. 'That is why, every Saturday afternoon, acting in my private capacity, I select the new boys who seem depressed and take them sight-seeing in London. It serves to distract their attention.'

I told him how much I should like to witness the process; whereupon he invited me to accompany the next party, which, he mentioned, would include Smithers and Douglas.

Accordingly, at two o'clock on the following Saturday, on arriving outside Fenchurch Street Station, I met Mr. Armitage with my two little friends and ten other serious lads in bright Barnardo uniforms. We forthwith set off on our westward journey, the two adults going first, closely followed by the youngsters, who walked two abreast in as close a formation as was possible on the crowded pavement.

On emerging from Lombard Street Mr. Armitage called a halt to point an identifying finger at the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange and the Mansion House. As his little auditors merely stood respectfully listening, and made no sign, I felt that inadequate justice was being done to the architectural and historical claims of three important British institutions; and it was with some idea of testing the efficacy of a more direct personal appeal that I took Smithers apart and explained to him that the gentleman who arranged the Lord Mayor's Show lived in the Mansion House and went about in a gorgeous carriage driven by an extremely fat coachman.

Smithers' response surprised me.

'I dreamt,' he said, 'that there was an awful fire; it was after seeing that picture, sir, and two women and a baby were burnt to death, and seven other people badly hurt.'

I had intended speaking about the bars of gold in the vaults of the Bank of England; but it did not seem worth while.

When Mr. Armitage had concluded his references to the Royal Exchange grasshopper, we crossed the road underground,

and, on issuing from the circular subway, ascended with our party to the top of a motor omnibus. It chanced that Douglas sat beside me; and I was soon drawing his attention to St. Paul's Cathedral, the Griffin, and other attractions of Central London. But whether he had seen them all before, or whether on a first inspection they proved disappointing, his dumb demeanour, varied by an occasional smile, failed to indicate.

After the most cursory examination of the Law Courts, he turned to me and, at last finding his tongue, asked—

‘When is my mother going to Canada?’

I had from time to time glanced at the ten boys who were strangers to me. But they remained strangers to me, since their unemonstrative behaviour, and the preoccupied expressions on their inert faces offered no clues to character. They were just ten little Barnardo boys; that was all I knew about them.

Alighting from the omnibus at Charing Cross, we gathered around the pedestal of King Charles' statue, Mr. Armitage once more acting as showman and lecturer. And this time he was sustained and encouraged

by verbal comments from interested auditors. I recognized that he was now playing a strong card. The fact of a man having his head cut off—and that man a King—appeals to a boy; and I found myself feeling personally grateful to the unfortunate Stuart monarch in that, because of the ghastly fate which overtook him, he was proving the means of rousing our little cluster of Georgian boys out of their doldrums.

In Whitehall the awakened interest was deepened on an inspection of the probable scene of the execution (the resplendent mounted soldiers stationed at the Horse Guards proving an acceptable auxiliary attraction); and by the time we entered Westminster Hall, to pause awhile on the spot where the doomed King confronted his judges, twelve little boys had, I think, temporarily forgotten their own cares in dwelling sympathetically upon the greater misfortune that had happened to somebody else.

Having discovered that the Office of Works, oblivious to the interests of Barnardo boys, had closed the House of Lords against the public on that particular afternoon, we walked round to Buckingham Palace. By that time

a lighter and freer spirit prevailed in our party. Nay, Smithers and Douglas had become so animated that, when I was walking with Mr. Armitage around the superb central feature of the Queen Victoria Memorial, a muffled scrimmage occurred near at hand, and I found my two boys warmly competing for the privilege of occupying the other place beside me. As, indeed, I more than suspected that some furtive punching and pinching had taken place, it became necessary to sound a warning note on the subject of jealousy; but it was comforting to observe that those two young gentlemen were now fully alert and alive, even though their animation found expression in a momentary hostility one to another.

On crossing Hyde Park to gain a glimpse of the frozen Serpentine, I had them on either side of me; and it happened that, while listening to their ready chatter (both dwelling, in some detail, on what they would like to have for tea), I became aware that, while the rest of our party were sociably united in twos and threes, one boy—and he the smallest—was walking alone. The sight becoming pathetic, I presently overtook him and en-

gaged in overtures of friendship. But he proved wholly unresponsive, and my reiterated attempts to draw him into conversation resulted in nothing but an occasional whispered response of which, though stooping in the effort to hear, I failed to catch the sense. It was clear that, enveloped in his own sad thoughts, he was indisposed for companionship; and so there was nothing for it, with my own two boys growing impatient for attention, but to leave that tiny pilgrim pursuing his solitary way along life's rugged highway.

'He only arrived yesterday,' Mr. Armitage told me a few minutes later. 'Poor little Mowbray, he has just been left alone in the world under very sad circumstances. At present, you see, he is completely shut up in his shell. But Time's influence is beautifully healing, and in a few days, never fear, we shall have him smiling.'

I noticed that, as he still trudged stolidly on, heeding nothing and nobody, Mowbray happened accidentally and unconsciously to drop one of his gloves, which, when it had been picked up and handed to him, he received mechanically, without so much as

turning his head. And he still trudged stolidly on.

At the Marble Arch station of the Twopenny Tube, Mr. Armitage paid all the fares, and then (it being difficult to keep the party together in the press of passengers) handed each boy his ticket—an incident to which there was destined to be a sequel.

Following in the wake of our little flock, I noticed that the last boy to arrive at the gate was Mowbray, who, upon being asked for his ticket (which he had meanwhile lost), stood helpless and confused, and burst into tears; at which the compassionate official, putting forth a hand to assist the little fellow's admission, assured him that it did not matter and he need not cry—words of consolation that were promptly echoed by kind-hearted bystanders.

In the car I sat beside Mowbray, and strove to entertain him with light comments on a variety of topics; but though an occasional 'yes' or 'no' passed his lips, and once I was rewarded by a little flickering smile, he was obviously in a sort of torpor. Nor, as his well-shaped features and high brow attested, was his state due in any way to mental

deficiency. His lips were tight, his breathing was slow and measured, and his restless, wide-open eyes seemed to be looking at nothing. The heart of that little boy was numbed by some recent overwhelming trouble.

We walked from the Bank to Aldgate, and on the way came to where a moving model in a shop window had caused a crowd to gather on the pavement. On the further side of that obstruction Mr. Armitage, on counting heads, noted that one of the party was missing; whereupon some of us retraced our steps and discovered Mowbray standing dazed on the fringe of the crowd, he having obviously lost track of our movements.

'Well, I never!' Smithers confided to me, with a grin and a shrug of his shoulders. 'First he loses his glove, then he loses his ticket, and now he goes and loses himself! He's a rum 'un, if you like.'

For, of course, a boy's sympathies have but a limited range. Smithers had borne his own misfortunes with a noble fortitude. But he was wholly oblivious of that little fellow-sufferer and brother stoic.

At Aldgate we were, of course, within easy reach of the pantries of Leopold House. But

it seemed that the programme at these weekly outings included, as a culminating treat, a substantial meal in a tea-shop. Mr. Armitage led us into an establishment where, as was indicated by the alacrity of smiling waitresses, he and his parties were familiar and welcome.

It is a gracious provision of Providence that little boys—even little boys whose happiness has been temporarily clouded—should enjoy their food, particularly when it is flavoured with sugar. I think I never saw a more consoling sight than was presented by our twelve little feasters. Smithers' face grew red and jolly as with great enthusiasm he devoured a scone. One of Douglas's gleeful eyes telegraphed me a merry wink, while the bulk of his face was buried in a mug of cocoa. I had not credited their companions with a fraction of the vitality they revealed under the influence of cake. It was an entirely new Mowbray who hesitated between a bun and gingerbread, and finally clutched at a sample of the latter.

Thus there was shown to be great healing virtue in the prescription Mr. Armitage offered to the young wounded hearts; and

the chattering in our ranks, as we departed from the tea-shop, marked a pleasant change from the manner in which, four hours before, we had set forth on our rambles. And I must not forget to mention an incident that occurred on our short walk to Fenchurch Street Station. A vendor of hot chestnuts, standing in the gutter beside his stall, caught sight of the approaching Barnardo procession, and, straightway seizing a number of his smoking dainties, smuggled them into the hands of the passing boys.

And so that humble costermonger all unconsciously became linked with the noble band of unselfish hearts who, by their gifts, encircle those little ones with a protecting love.

Smithers and Douglas stood at the window waving to me as the train departed on its brief run to Burdett Road; and I did not see them again until several days later. In the interval, however, their affairs did not fail to occupy some portion of my thoughts. Thus from the Salvation Army I received the following communication with regard to Mrs. Douglas—

‘This case is now practically completed.

We have secured two references and a medical certificate, in addition to our own officer's report. We reckon it will cost £18 to see the mother and little girl through, £4 of which would be for outfit and the balance for incidental expenses. We will make a loan of £10 to be repaid after Mrs. Douglas has settled in Canada, and an outright grant of £8.'

Moreover, the growing interest I felt in Smithers had prompted me to revisit the scene of his sufferings and give myself the pleasure of meeting one who had done so much to alleviate them.

The fried-fish shop proved small, but full of neatness and a beautiful spirit. Nor will it be a correct inference on the reader's part that the attractions of the little establishment existed only in my imagination. Let me frankly admit that, had the place proved dirty and evil-smelling, it would still have found acceptance in my eyes. But it is the simple truth that floor and counter had been thoroughly scoured, that kippers, bloaters and haddocks were methodically arranged on a clean marble slab, and that, with ample through ventilation, the atmosphere was only pleasantly tinged with the wholesome

aroma of fish, instead of being charged with the usual imprisoned fumes of boiling fat.

Therefore that bright little shop afforded an appropriate setting for the neatly-dressed and happy-faced woman of middle age whom I found behind the counter.

Her speech was marked by a simple sincerity. Upon my referring to Smithers, and the timely sustenance he had received at her hands, she made no attempt either to eulogize or to minimize her action; she merely said it would not have been right to let him go hungry, and she was very pleased that he was now in Dr. Barnardo's Homes, where he would be nicely looked after. But more impressive than her words was the radiant kindness of her face.

As I left that little fried-fish shop—that shrine of wisdom and faith—I knew that all was well with the world.

CHAPTER VI

FEEDING LITTLE BOYS AND ELEPHANTS

WHEN next I saw Smithers and Douglas they were attentive and well-behaved pupils in the Barnardo school at Stepney Causeway; and, on the class being dismissed at four o'clock, we three walked together to Leopold House.

Smithers was in a state of fidgety high spirits, and full of erratic conversation, which he varied with spasmodic whistling and humming as he ambled along by my side. Douglas, walking more soberly, smiled with silent complacency.

'No more tears, eh?' I suggested.

'Oh, he's at it now and again!' was Smithers' offhand and rather scornful testimony. 'Wouldn't it be better, sir, if he was to run about and join in the games, same as all the rest of us do?'

'Please, sir, he won't play with me!'
Douglas complained.

'Well, he spits at me!' Smithers hotly rejoined.

And, indeed, as now began to dawn on me, these two were quite ordinary and commonplace boys—a truth that was destined to be emphasized later in the afternoon. For once more I took tea with Mr Armitage in the parlour at Leopold House, and, the conversation turning on variety in juvenile character, he spoke individually of several of his lads whose refinement and high mental or moral qualities would make them conspicuous in any school. Later, when we visited the crowded dining-hall, he brought certain of these boys under my observation; whereupon, noting their fine faces, I found myself regretting that chance had not thrown one of those rare characters in my way when I set out to gather material for this book. Yet, as a moment's reflection served to show, the very fact that they were exceptional characters made them ineligible for my purpose. It behoved me to study boys who were representative, not exceptional. If Smithers was somewhat self-centred and had a bullet-

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shaped head, at any rate he had proved himself a man in the hour of trial ; and if a winning smile seemed to be the one noteworthy external feature of Douglas, at least the life of that taciturn young gentleman was ruled by a faithful filial love. And the more I studied the multitude of faces around me, the more satisfied I became that Smithers and Douglas were fairly typical Barnardo boys. Desiring, therefore, to gain a further insight into their characters, I sought and obtained permission to take them for a further spell of sight-seeing on the following Saturday.

It was nearly noon when, on that day, I arrived at Leopold House, and the two boys readily fell in with my suggestion that, as the first item in our afternoon's programme, we should at once proceed to the City and get some dinner.

Their spirits were high when we entered the train, and were destined to rise higher before we reached our destination. For, ere leaving home, I had been entrusted by a lady with four large apples and eight tangerine oranges to bestow upon the boys ; and, not quite seeing why I should continue to have my pockets burdened with their property, I

took an early opportunity of handing the fruit over to them, coupled with an injunction that they should not start eating it yet, or they might spoil their appetites for dinner.

'What funny little oranges!' commented mystified Smithers, when he had concluded his hornpipe.

'They're tangerines!' exclaimed better-informed Douglas, who had limited himself to chuckling.

A large plate of Irish stew, accompanied by bread, potatoes and haricot beans, and followed by a liberal serving of jam roly-poly—such was the meal which Smithers washed down with two tumblers of milk, and Douglas with a cup of cocoa and no less than three glasses of water; and since my guests not only announced themselves as satisfied, but offered corroborative testimony by undoing the lower buttons of their tunics, I deemed the food problem to have been solved for the time being. Judge then of my surprise when, before we had proceeded ten paces from the restaurant, I discovered Douglas in the act of eating a tangerine.

'You'd think he could wait a bit, sir, wouldn't you, when he's just had such a

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lovely dinner?' was the pious comment that came from Smithers; and, as his tone implied censure, I was considerably astonished to find, a few moments later, that precept had ignominiously capitulated to example and that Smithers was also eating a tangerine. Nay, he was eating, in rapid succession, four tangerines. Then, without a pause, he started on an apple. The younger boy had had the advantage of a few seconds' start; but it proved a neck-and-neck race. I did not time them, but certainly within ten minutes the second apple had, in both cases, disappeared—pulp, skin and core.

To the adult mind—accustomed to compare bulk with probable cubic capacity—the baffling mystery is how they manage to do it. My business, however, is merely to record events and their results. In this particular case, all I can certify, under the latter head, is that, as we walked to St. Paul's Cathedral, those two boys were as agile and vivacious as at any time in my knowledge of them.

We entered the Cathedral, and, besides standing under the lofty dome, made a tour of the aisles, where, passing at several of

the monuments, I whispered scraps of biography concerning the men whose fame and exploits were celebrated in marble. Smithers interjected a few questions, which betrayed a genuine passing interest in some of our naval heroes; but Douglas was frankly inattentive, not to say bored.

As we left the Cathedral, indeed, my brain was busy with the problem of how to entertain a little boy who, so far as I had been able to follow the working of his mind, was interested only in his mother and in food. That his sympathies were, however, of wider range, the proof was soon to be supplied.

'Hullo! Where's Alfred?' I inquired of Smithers, when we were half-way down the steps. And the sight we saw, on turning round, caused us to go back.

Douglas had discovered the City pigeons. Seated on the top step, he was absorbed in a successful endeavour to coax some of them within a few inches of his hand. And soon he was searching round for derelict fragments, which may or may not have been edible, and offering his finds to the birds.

'Just look at him!' exclaimed Smithers,

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with an indulgent grin. 'He seems regular taken up with those pigeons.'

'Yes,' I said. 'Suppose we go to the Zoo?'

'Please, sir, I've been there,' Smithers mildly demurred.

'Well, then, the World's Fair—a menagerie, and circus, and things?'

'Yes, I'd like that,' Smithers heartily agreed.

But first I took them to Blackfriars Bridge, intent on bringing birds of another genus under their notice; and if Smithers looked somewhat coldly on the sea-gulls (he having, as he explained, seen them before), Douglas nearly lost his cap, and was in some danger of toppling over the Embankment parapet, in his eagerness to get at close quarters with the circling cloud of white wings and eager beaks.

My knowledge of omnibus routes proving at fault, we were involved in a walk of about two miles to the Agricultural Hall. On the way, Smithers complained of feeling thirsty. So I sent him with a penny into a shop to get a glass of milk. Douglas, when I asked him, said he did not want any. 'But,'

added the accommodating boy, 'I shouldn't mind an orange.' So I sent him with a penny into a greengrocer's; and it was a proof of the interest excited by a Barnardo boy that he was supplied with three large specimens of the fruit he desired.

I watched developments out of a corner of my eye.

Promptly Douglas offered one of the oranges to Smithers, who accepted it, though only after a little bashful hesitation, which showed him doubtful of his title to the favour. Then Douglas wanted me to have an orange; whereupon I relieved the situation of further tension by ruling that, while he did well to give one to Smithers, he was entitled to eat the other two himself—which, without more ado, he did.

Our first half-hour in the Agricultural Hall was spent in reserved seats that commanded an intimate view of the circus; the varied programme of equestrianism, juggling and clowning being followed by my two companions with a wholly undemonstrative attention. Yet their obvious relief, when the programme drew to a close, caused me, I confess, no less disappointment than sur-

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prise; which only passed away when, on our setting out to examine the side-shows, I noticed the rising enthusiasm depicted on their faces.

Condemn an enterprising boy to look at only one entertainment when he knows dozens of others are going on around him, and you fill him with an uneasy sense of what he may be missing. Moreover, when the choice is offered, an enterprising boy will naturally prefer to be doing something instead of merely looking on; and I was soon to perceive that both Smithers and Douglas took greater delight in firing at bottles than in seeing somebody else jump through paper hoops.

To my surprise, both of them handled a gun with confidence and—if the destruction of their glass targets was anything to go by—with efficiency, though they were by no means of one mind as to the relative merit of their marksmanship. When at length I insisted that we must move on from the shooting-galleries, they accorded my wish a somewhat grudging acquiescence; though as soon as we reached the menagerie, I knew I was forgiven. It certainly was a fine

collection of various beasts—large and small, wild and tame, ravenous and replete.

Douglas was beside himself with amazement and joy on beholding strangely-shaped creatures of which, it seemed, he had seen no living counterparts.

Separated from spectators by only a low wooden rail, were three tethered elephants, a couple of camels and a disreputable-looking dromedary. Like a little boy mesmerized, Douglas stood staring at the largest elephant's laborious efforts to secure nourishment: the pink cavern of the monster mouth opening wide enough to receive a bushel of corn or half a truss of hay, though doomed to close ignominiously on a brazil nut, or a mere acid drop, thrown by some frivolous member of a frugal public. Absolutely without fear, Douglas went right up to the rail, so that an elephant's trunk rubbed against his arm and a pendant fringe of matted camel's hair brushed his shoulder. Nay, the animals looked so large and he looked so small, that I hastened to pluck him out of their reach, lest in their hunger they should mistake a bright little Barnardo boy as diet proper to a ruminant.

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It took much persuasion to get him away from the lions and tigers, and I had to use force to detach him from a cage of monkeys. On catching sight of those nimble quadrupeds, he had run forward and pressed a face of ecstasy against the wirework ; which impelled me to hint at several excellent reasons why we should not approach too close to monkeys.

"I wish I'd got something to give them," exclaimed Douglas ; whereupon the two boys, seized simultaneously with a generous impulse, searched the surrounding area of floor for derelict fragments of food, which they pushed into the cage.

'Would you like some of those ?' I asked, pointing to a stall laden with biscuits which, though by no means of an attractive appearance, were no doubt suitable enough for the brute creation.

'Oh, yes, sir !' Smithers and Douglas eagerly replied.

So I stepped across to the stall, and—remembering that we should be passing the elephants on our way back—I bought each boy a large bagful.

But this incident only served to show

how easy it is for different minds, while apparently working in unison, to be hopelessly at cross purposes.

Having thanked me for the biscuits, the boys at once began to eat them, and to eat them with such sustained gusto that—loath to introduce a jarring note into the proceedings—I abstained from indicating the direction in which my hospitality had been intended.

Nor had the bags been, in the manner referred to, completely emptied when, on looking at my watch, I discovered that it was time we were moving; and the last of the biscuits were consumed as we walked from the Agricultural Hall towards the neighbouring Tube Station.

It was in my mind, as I explained, that we should take a train to the Bank, walk to Aldgate and there have tea before proceeding to Leopold House. But a complication arose. Douglas announced that he was thirsty; nor did either boy, as I was astonished to find, contemplate without misgiving the prospect of waiting twenty minutes for his evening meal.

Therefore, subordinating my views to theirs, I took them into an Islington confectioner's,

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where—contrary to what I should have supposed physically possible—they each despatched a couple of eggs on toast, a roll and butter, and several cakes, besides consuming some nutritious beverages.

And so I think I can claim that Smithers and Douglas, when I restored them to Mr. Armitage, were in as well-nourished and complacent a condition as when I received them at his hands.

Nor—as subsequent visits to Leopold House served to reveal—was that complacency of a temporary character. I was witnessing such a marvel as only love can work : shadows yielding to sunshine in young human lives ; the troubled minds, wounded spirits and stunted bodies giving place to healthy, hearty, happy boyhood.

My mental eye saw children rattling collection-boxes, men writing cheques, and women signing codicils. To look at them, those people were just ordinary, every-day earth-dwellers, yet I knew they were numbered among souls that abide in radiant realms of wisdom. For they served humanity ; and fruits of their unselfishness were to be seen in the altered lives of Smithers and

Douglas and of tens of thousands of other rescued little ones.

I had followed my two boys through the first stage of social redemption. I had seen their young spirits released from the fetters of destitution. Of the second stage—concerned with arming them for the battle of life—there was a preliminary promise when Smithers and Douglas, coming to me with jubilant faces, announced that they had just been vaccinated in readiness for Canada.

The authorities at Stepney Causeway had decided that both should go out with the next party. And thus their careers were destined to lack one experience that falls to many Barnardo emigrants—they would have no preliminary sojourn in a cottage of the Home Land. However, it occurred to me that if, when next in rural England, I dropped into a cottage that contained two Barnardo boys, I should be able to form some idea of how Smithers and Douglas would have looked under similar conditions.

Accordingly, finding myself at Long Melford, in Suffolk, a few days later, I took from my pocket a list of names, and was soon asking my way to Mrs. Brown's.

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That she lived more than a mile from the railway station proved anything but a hardship, since my walk took me through an elongated village of peace and beauty and picturesque old ivy-clad houses having windows with diamond panes. Also I saw a noble church, a village green and many kindly folk quietly pursuing their uneventful lives.

Ere I reached my destination, a gentle snow-storm came on to impart a new grace to that fair scene.

'Come in—come in out of the weather,' was Mrs. Brown's immediate invitation, when she opened her door at my knock.

The apartment I entered, which seemed to be full of children, monopolized the basement of the cottage; and I noted the humble stairs that led to a room, or rooms, above. One of the only two chairs was promptly made available for the visitor. Most of the unkempt children were huddled around the dreary little fire that flickered in the grate.

'I came to see your two boys,' I explained.

'My *two*!' replied the flabbergasted woman.

'Mercy me! I've got six, and a girl besides.'

'I meant your two Barnardo boys.'

'Barnardo boys!' she echoed in amazement. 'There be none of they here. I've enough of my own without looking after other folks'. Why,'—as light dawned upon her perplexity—'if they haven't sent you to the wrong house! It'll be the Mrs. Brown in the village you wanted to see. Aye, I mind she's got two London boys.'

Whereupon I could only express regret for my unwarranted intrusion. However, the good soul insisted that no apology was necessary; and she would not hear of my leaving in the midst of a snow-storm.

So I stayed there chatting for half an hour, my questions drawing from Mrs. Brown some clues to the straitened circumstances in which that family existed. It seemed that her husband, an agricultural labourer, earned no more than sixteen shillings a week. And there was the rent to pay and nine mouths to feed. Five quartern loaves were conspicuous on the table, and it was on bread, I found, that those poor creatures mainly subsisted—a fact that served to explain the flabby, unhealthy appearance of her group of listless little ones.

Alas! peer beneath the pretty surface of

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life in rural England and you find—the dull ache of poverty.

When the snow abated I took my departure; nor was it long before I had entered the very different home of the other Mrs. Brown. She herself proved to be temporarily confined to her bed upstairs; but Mr. Brown, on learning that I had called to see the boys, lost no time in ushering me into a cosy parlour and establishing me in one of the arm-chairs placed beside the genial hearth. He himself, by way of being sociable, took the other. But I noticed that he looked anxious and uncomfortable.

‘You haven’t come to say they are going to leave us?’ Mr. Brown blurted out.

On my disabusing him of that idea, his brow cleared and he broke into a jolly laugh.

‘You see how it is,’ he was presently explaining confidentially, ‘they’ve been with us nigh on two years now, and I’ve come to feel like as if they were my own boys. And my wife feels just the same about it. It comes, you see, of not having children of our own. But they be two fine little fellows—aye, and such chatterboxes. I tell you, from the moment they wake in the morning,

they keep the house bright and cheerful. And it's wonderful how well they get on together. Yet there couldn't be two boys more different in their ways: Willie being fond of reading, and never so happy as when he's got an interesting book; while Pat's more of an open-air boy and likes to be out with his hoop, or spinning a top. But there's one thing they're both taken up with—that rabbits"; and my enthusiastic host, going to the window, drew my attention to the row of hutches in the back garden. He proved so well posted on points of pedigree, and as to individual qualities of the imprisoned rodents, that I rather suspected him of active co-operation in the juvenile fancy.

The boys, it seemed, would not be back from school for three-quarters of an hour; and, to beguile the interval, my genial host, puffing contentedly at his pipe, put on the kettle and busied himself in making toast—domestic duties devolving upon him during the temporary indisposition of his wife. Presently, indeed, he had laid the cloth and we were enjoying the afternoon repast; following which, he re-set the table and

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made more toast against the return of Pat and Willie.

This led me to remark that, instead of foster-parents waiting on the boarded-out boys, I should have supposed boarded-out boys would wait on the foster-parents.

'They're willing enough,' good-natured Mr. Brown bore witness. 'Still, what with school and play, they don't get a great deal of time for helping in the house. Not, mind you, that they'll see my wife washing up without lending her a hand. But helping with the pony and the fowls pleases them best; and there's no getting them away from my brother-in-law's farm when the haymaking is on. . . . Ha! here they come!'

And as he spoke our peace was broken by an on-rushing succession of sounds: the outer door slamming, feet stampeding along the passage, our own door bursting open, one laughing boy drawing a yell from the other as he smote him from the rear, a pair of satchels being simultaneously flung on the sofa, and two voices crying in chorus, 'Hullo! dad,' and 'How's mother?' On catching sight of the visitor, they threw me

a friendly 'Afternoon, sir!' then hurled themselves on the sofa and engaged in a playful attempt to strangle one another.

'I say! I say!' exclaimed Mr. Brown, mildly shocked. 'That's a nice way to behave before company. Come and say How-d'you-do properly to this gentleman. He's come from the Barnardo Homes to see you.'

The playfulness dropped away from Pat and Willie like a mantle. They came and stood before me with hands down and heads up—quiet as lambs, inert as statues.

'Well, my lads, do you like being at Long Melford?' I asked.

'Yes, sir.'

'You certainly look as if the place suits you.'

No response.

'Getting on all right at school, eh?'

'Yes, sir.'

I made a few more remarks; but it was uphill work. For the two reputed chatter-boxes had gone dumb. Nor, manifestly, was their taciturnity in any way related to shyness. They were doggedly dumb. Nay, it was impossible to shut my eyes to

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the fact that those two boys did not like me. I was discouraged. It proved disconcerting to find friendly overtures so coldly received; and soon, in self-defence, I entered into conversation with Mr. Brown. The boys went and sat on the edge of the sofa, and still said nothing.

To my eyes they seemed very ordinary boys. As they wore no uniform, there was nothing to show that they were Barnardo boys.

I reflected that my afternoon had been an unprofitable one, and, this consideration giving me an interest in the time, I looked at my watch and discovered that, if I hurried, I could catch the next train. So I wished Pat and Willie good-evening and took my departure, Mr. Brown accompanying me to the outer door.

I had latterly noticed, without particularly remarking, a sort of repressed twinkle in his eyes. There proved to be private tidings he was bursting to communicate.

'Did you notice how stand-offish they were?' he chuckled. 'I could see what it was. They had the same idea that I had, and fancied you might have come to see about taking them away. It's only natural,

isn't it? The little chaps get used to people they know, and they can't bear the idea of going away to strangers.'

'Please tell them,' I begged, 'that my visit did not mean anything of the kind. But of course——'

'Yes, yes,' quavered Mr. Brown, his mood swiftly changing from gaiety to sadness, 'sooner or later, of course, the day must come. I know, I know—it's for their own good.'

And so I brought from Long Melford the knowledge that, if Smithers and Douglas had missed the advantages of life in an English village, they had also missed the pangs they would have felt on parting from their foster-parents to go to Canada.

Yet, as I learnt on visiting Leopold House, there were pangs of another sort that Smithers was not destined to miss. Meeting me in the hall, Miss Armitage mentioned that, two days previously, one of my boys was seen to be suffering from a chill, whereupon, for fear his symptoms should develop into a contagious malady, he had been placed in the isolation hospital. Miss Armitage added, however, that the doctor's latest report

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removed all ground for apprehension, and that the patient would no doubt receive his discharge early next morning.

Smithers, when I found him in some occupation of a ward in an adjoining building, was voluble concerning the misgivings he had felt on finding his health under suspicion.

"Here's a pretty state of things," I thought to myself, sir, "if I'm going to be ill, and not able to go to Canada." I didn't feel very ill—only a bit shivery—and I kept saying to myself, "What a pity—what a pity, after passing the doctor so nicely, and been vaccinated and all."

But it seemed that an anxious situation had not been entirely without its compensations.

'Look at these lovely picture-books they've given me to read,' exclaimed the grateful patient. 'And you do get nice food to eat here—custard, milk puddings, fruit and I don't know what all. If it wasn't for Canada, he added thoughtfully, 'I wouldn't mind stopping another week in this hospital.'

So long did I stay chatting with that serene and healthy-looking invalid that, on my return to the main building, a wondrous

calm pervaded it, and I learnt that the boys had gone to bed. So, by permission, and with a youthful guide, I mounted to one of the upper dormitories, bent on offering good-night greetings to little Douglas.

Picture a spacious perspective of snow-white coverlets and little pink faces—many of the latter with books propped up before them. For the boys of Leopold House, having got into bed, are allowed to lie there reading for awhile, before the lights are turned down; and I arrived in that peaceful period of privilege.

Douglas, when we had located him, smiled benignly upon his unexpected visitor.

‘Well, you’ll soon be off to Canada now!’ I reminded him.

‘Yes, sir’—and he screwed up his eyes and mouth in token of pleasurable anticipations.

‘Please, sir, so am I going!’ ‘And me, too!’ ‘Same here, sir!’—those and similar assurances came as an enthusiastic chorus from little boys sitting up in bed, and competing for notice, all round about me.

It was impressive to see so many of Canada’s future citizens in their youth and their night-gowns.

CHAPTER VII

CHOOSING A HEROINE

MEANWHILE my human interests had not been of the one-sided character that this narrative would seem to indicate. I had not forgotten that there are Barnardo girls, as well as Barnardo boys. Gatekeepers at the Barkingside Village had come to recognize me for a frequent visitor.

If that village did not exist, I should have said it could not exist. It looks like the beautiful dream of an idealist; which, of course, it once was—its author a man of daring unselfishness and all-conquering compassion. It is like unto other villages save that it is prettier and lacks shops, traffic and strangers. Other villages are penetrated by highways open to the outer world; this village is a world by itself—a little world of girls.

At my first visit, Mr. J. W. Godfrey, the governor, gave me the right of subsequent

entry; and thus it came about that often I heard the pigeons cooing in their dovecotes, often I saw the stately elms and the encircling expanse of sward, and often I trod the broad paths that wind past shrubberies and flowerbeds to the terraces of dainty cottages. Yet the chief beauty of the village lies, not in its aspect, but its spirit. When found starving, or in cruel usage, or running risk of moral contamination, girls, even more than boys, command the outstretched hand. At Barkingside, love spares itself no pains to remedy their wrongs. It is a village not alone of safety but of sunshine.

On my first visit, I saw so many girls that, in a manner of speaking, I did not see any. There was a studious multitude in the schoolrooms, a steaming multitude in the laundry, an expert multitude in the lace-making and embroidery department, and there were happy groups playing and promenading in the open. At the end of the afternoon, indeed, I regretfully realized that, though nearly a thousand little petticoated people had been brought under my notice, I still had not so much as a nodding acquaintance with a single Barnardo girl.

Accordingly, on my next visit, I took counsel with Miss Humphreys, the organizer of contingents for Canada ; explaining that, to further my literary intentions, I fain would peer into the mind of one of her prospective emigrants.

And Miss Humphreys, who had heard of my interest in a certain young gentleman named Smithers, at once replied : ' I see ! You have found a Barnardo hero for your book, and now you want to find a Barnardo heroine ! '

Which, of course, was a delightful way of stating the case.

' Well,' she continued, ' every day now I shall be interviewing batches of the girls, and deciding which are likely to go and which are likely to prove ineligible ; and if you come next Wednesday afternoon I will have half a dozen ready for you to choose from. But perhaps it would be as well,' she added, after a moment's reflection, ' if you gave me some idea of the sort of little girl you would care for ? '

This, however, proved a poser. Nor, under cross-examination, was I able to say if my preference lay in the direction of a blonde,

or whether my tastes were likely to be better suited by a brunette. Miss Humphreys was, I fear, mildly scandalized to discover that a writer could be setting out to choose a heroine, and yet have an open—not to say a blank—mind on points like that.

‘I think I should like a chatty little person,’ was my lame explanation, ‘who has a character and a temperament that one can catch hold of. But the main thing is that she should be a typical Barnardo girl.’

Miss Humphreys promised to do the best she could for me; and, on the following Wednesday, I found no fewer than nine warmly-clad little misses standing in a row, awaiting my scrutiny. The author, who pretended not to be shy, was introduced vaguely as a gentleman who would be going with the party to Canada.

‘Good afternoon, sir,’ came in unison from those nine unconscious candidates for the vacant office of heroine. To add to my confusion, they dropped me nine simultaneous little curtsies.

‘I hope you don’t feel cold standing there,’ I remarked, for once finding it an advantage

that the personal pronoun applies equally in the plural and the singular.

'No, sir,' they all assured me. The row of little girls obviously possessed a sort of unity. It is a curious sensation to be addressing a heroine that measures about twelve feet from side to side and speaks with nine tongues.

'And what is your name?' was my next foolish question.

It would have simplified matters for me if, in reply, there had come an even chorus of, say, 'Polly Brown.' But the hydra-headed heroine proved to have a rich, and indeed bewildering, variety of names.

So I decided to detach one little girl from the row and ask her to take me for a walk. But which little girl? I scanned the nine faces without being able to decide whether I liked one more than the others. They seemed very much alike.

No doubt Miss Humphreys, lacking all clues to my own taste in little girls, had been compelled to fall back on her own. I gathered that that lady had strong leanings towards the chubby and the demure.

Finally I resorted to the expedient of

picking out the little girl who was nearest ; and, with a gracious smile, she consented to escort me about the village.

She told me her name was Ethel Roberts ; all other inquiries being answered with a dainty little 'Yes, sir,' or 'No, sir.' Therefore most of the talking fell to me. To avoid anything in the nature of awkward pauses, I found myself pouring out a stream of questions, each of which Ethel answered so quickly that I hardly had time to think of the next one to ask.

Among other things, I learnt that she liked being at the village, that she went to school, that she had three dollies and that she thought Canada would be very nice. I also learnt something else, namely, that most of the visitors to the village are ladies ; which piece of information Ethel unconsciously conveyed by every now and then addressing me as 'Mum'—an inadvertence she always made apologetic haste to rectify.

We came to the noble church, and, at my request, Ethel took me inside. Soon the following conversation was prompted by a text on the wall—

'Ah ! "Feed my lambs." There are

not many prettier words than those, are there ?'

'No, sir.'

'Are you one of the lambs, Ethel ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And do they feed you nicely ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Will you take me to your cottage ?'

'Yes, mum—I mean, sir.'

Nor was it long before we had tapped at the door of Primrose Cottage and been welcomed by the 'mother' of its eighteen young occupants. The smiling lady took me over the premises, which were a surprising revelation of what a home looks like when there are no brothers to come in with dirty boots and untidy habits, and no daddy to leave newspapers and tobacco pipes lying about.

If they had known I was coming—nay, if they had thought King George was coming—that family could not possibly have got their cottage into smarter trim. And mark this—it was smart with the smartness, not of Persian rugs and choice porcelain, but of cleanliness and order. The floors and staircase shone and glowed with cleanliness, like newly-fallen snow or milk in a milkmaid's

pail. In the kitchen, all the pots and pans were so many extra mirrors, into which the girls could glance to adjust their hair. Even the coal-scuttle looked as though it had just had a bath. The bedrooms—with windows wide open to let in the sweet country air and the chirp of the birds—were pictures of snowy simplicity. Downstairs I was privileged to inspect some of the wardrobe cupboards, where the hats of every girl lay on top of her carefully-folded clothes. In Primrose Cottage, indeed, everything was in its place, and there was a place for everything—except for a speck of dirt.

The playroom was a glowing bazaar of dolls and their houses, cradles and basinettes, intermingled with balls, rocking-horses, wooden hoops and other toys. All were methodically arranged—the floor innocent of those dismembered bodies, severed heads and derelict limbs which make the average nursery look so like a battlefield. It seemed that the inhabitants of Primrose Cottage included schoolgirls of all grades, from kindergarten to the sixth standard, besides a group of seniors who worked in the laundry and at lace-making. That instincts of compassion

and service might find an outlet, two cripples and a baby were numbered among the family.

From Primrose Cottage, Ethel and I strolled back to the scene of our introduction; and her eight companions, on seeing us coming, re-arranged themselves in an attentive group. This time I made the interesting discovery that two of them not only answered to the same Christian name, but lived in the same cottage. So I gave Ethel a farewell pat on the cheek, and went for a stroll with the pair of little Katies.

Walking close together beside me, they developed the same conversational style as Ethel, that is to say, when I asked a question they answered 'Yes, sir,' or 'No, sir,' and when I made an observation that was in the nature of a comment, rather than an inquiry, they were dumb. Yet not entirely dumb, since they manifested a tendency to put their round and rosy little faces together and engage in unsuccessful efforts to abstain from giggling.

Indeed, finding myself once more baffled in my search for personal traits and clues to individuality, I asked them to take me to

their cottage, which, after a mild outbreak of smothered laughter, they did.

Rose Cottage proved in all essentials a duplicate of Primrose Cottage. Again I looked upon floor boards that shone with whiteness. Now I came to think of it, I had witnessed the same phenomenon at Leopold House and Stepney Causeway. It occurred to me that the Barnardo organization must have discovered an important domestic secret; and I inquired of the Katies' 'mother'—

'What chemical do you use on the floors?'

'Not any,' she laughingly assured me. 'It is all done by industrious little hands that are taught how to use a scrubbing brush. If some forgetful person goes hurrying upstairs with muddy boots—and I am sorry to say that does happen sometimes—the marks are washed out before they have time to stain the wood. You know, the great secret of keeping a house nice is, not to make it clean and tidy every now and then, but to keep it clean and tidy all the time.'

Which is the way they are able to talk at Barkingside; but the rule can hardly apply in the outer world, where households include,

not only the sex that does the domestic work, but also the sex that forgets to wipe its boots on the mat.

However, I broke off from these reflections on recalling that, after all, they were not carrying me in the desired direction. Of what avail to be picking up wrinkles for a treatise on domestic economy, when one is proposing to write a book on a totally different subject?

On learning that the two Katies were baffling my best endeavours at character reading, their amused foster-mother left them with me for a while in her cosy parlour. Seated in an easy chair, and holding one of their hands in each of mine, I opened up all manner of topics, from why dolls are stuffed with sawdust to whether they thought they would like Canadian candies. But it was of no use. They veiled their personality behind monosyllables, dimples and spasms of stifled merriment.

So I took them back and started off with another little girl. Also about her I can tell you nothing, except that her name was Gwenny, and that she was a chubby little person who smiled with great self-possession

and defeated all my efforts to draw her out. Once more I fell back on the expedient of asking my uncommunicative little companion to take me to her cottage.

'Oh, please come in,' said the slim girl who opened the door of Sweetbriar Cottage. 'But I'm sorry mother is not at home to receive you.'

I replied that I had merely called to see Gwenny's dolls; and at once we were ushered into the playroom.

'And are you the deputy foster-mother?' I asked the slim girl.

'Well, no, sir,' she replied with a smile, 'I'm afraid I've no right to be called that. But as I have to keep indoors because of not being very well, mother is able to leave me to look after things when she is away. This large Noah's ark,' she added, on proceeding to do the honours, 'belongs to our two babies. These dolls'—pointing to a brightly-attired muster of wax-faced specimens—'are new ones that the girls received at Christmas. Those over there'—indicating a larger congregation—'they have had much longer.'

'Would you think it very impertinent of me,' I said, 'to ask your name?'

'My name is Edith Murray,' she replied; and as, without a trace of self-consciousness, she raised her eyes to mine, I was struck by the sweet expression of her delicate pale face.

She opened a large doll's-house and drew my attention to its varied contents.

'And how old are you, Edith?'

'I shall be twelve next birthday. Ah! here is one of Gwenny's dolls'; and, smoothing the folds of its satin frock, she held out the bogus infant for my inspection.

Gwenny all this time was gazing at Edith with eyes of adoring devotion.

'And which are *your* dolls?' I asked.

'Mine?' she lightly laughed. 'Well, I haven't any.'

'You don't mean to say you feel too grown-up!' I protested. 'Surely there are older girls than you in Sweetbriar Cottage who have dolls?'

'Oh, yes,' Edith made haste to explain. 'It isn't that. But—well, you see, I'm interested in other things.'

'What other things?'

'Oh, it's not worth talking about,' she replied, struggling with her embarrassment

'Let me see'—and she hastily turned to the table of toys—'where is your birthday doll, Gwenny?'

'Oh, but do tell me what things you are interested in,' I persisted.

'No, *please*,' she entreated; and I noted that a slight flush had mounted to her temples. But her air of quiet dignity had not forsaken her.

She sought to engage my attention with another doll's-house; but, refusing to be interested, I held to my point.

'What are the other things that interest you? Really, Edith, I think you might tell me.'

'I know,' broke in Gwenny, suddenly finding her tongue; and, her face aglow with enthusiasm, she blurted out: 'She makes clothes for our dollies, and mends them, and——'

But Edith arrested these disclosures with a wave of her hand. Then, choosing the lesser of two evils, she capitulated and, stepping to a shelf, took down an oblong box. Placing it before me, she raised the lid, disclosing in one compartment many bright-hued reels of silk, and, in the other, several

miniature articles of attire in course of completion.

'It's nothing at all,' she quietly explained. 'But this interests me, because I like doing fancy needlework.'

'Are you going to Canada?' I asked.

'No, sir.'

'But why not? I'm so disappointed to hear you say "No." It's a beautiful country, and girls get on much better there than in England. I feel sure you would like Canada. Why don't you want to go?'

'It doesn't attract me at all,' Edith replied. 'I much prefer to remain in England. Grandma, when she was alive, didn't want me to go either. So I've quite made up my mind about it'; and her tone, even more than her words, showed how useless it would be to pursue the subject.

Leaving Gwenny at Sweetbriar Cottage, I returned to Miss Humphreys.

'Well,' inquired that lady, 'have you been able to fall in love with any of our little girls?'

'Yes,' I dolefully replied, 'I've found my heroine, but she refuses to go to Canada'; and I recounted the story of my failure.

'Edith Murray!' echoed Miss Humphreys. 'Why, that was most unfortunate, for, of all the girls I have spoken to, Edith is the most emphatic in her refusal to go to Canada. And so you were not attracted by any of those to whom I introduced you?'

'Indeed you must not think that,' I protested. 'They are most delightful little girls, and every one is a picture of cherubic happiness. But they are altogether too healthy and contented to be suitable as heroines. Why, they are just dear little fat things whose existence is a comfortable round of smiling, eating and sleeping.'

'Yes, I think that is so—*now*,' Miss Humphreys quietly replied; and, taking a sheaf of papers from a drawer, she handed them to me.

The nine sheets explained why, in various recent years, the nine little girls had been admitted to Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Six had come from a state of destitution that must have involved the dull sufferings of semi-starvation. One had been rescued from the custody of a grossly unsuitable person. The other two, in addition to going short of food, had been subjected to kicks and blows.

Thus once more I realized the fact it was happily so easy to forget, namely, that a pathetic past lay behind every girl and every boy in Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Barkingside had restored those nine little girls to the normal happiness of childhood, and had done this so effectually that their former state was almost beyond belief.

Incidentally, however, life in a feminine community had—as I suggested to Miss Humphreys—unfitted them to unbosom themselves, at short notice, to a representative of the unfamiliar sex.

'If you think that,' said Miss Humphreys, 'perhaps you would like, on your next visit, to try and make friends with some of the girls who have been boarded out.'

'That,' I gratefully replied, 'should be very interesting.'

And—when the day came—so it proved.

Miss Humphreys placed a large room at my disposal—a room that contained a comfortable fire, against which she set a chair for me to occupy. Then she arranged a semi-circle of ten chairs in front of the fire, and, having promised to furnish some little girls to sit on them, she withdrew, leaving me in

a lonely state of expectation. I doubt whether, in the history of English literature, more scientific measures were ever set on foot to provide an author with a heroine.

Presently the door opened and Miss Humphreys reappeared, accompanied by a small girl, whom she introduced as Violet Fleming.

'Now, I want you to talk very nicely to this gentleman,' said the coaxing lady, 'and tell him all the interesting things you can think of.'

That this was rather a large order Violet seemed to realize; and for just a moment her little rosebud of a mouth was contracted in thought. Then, with the air of one conscientiously set on rising to the needs of the moment, she said: 'Very well, Miss Humphreys.'

The next minute Violet and I were alone; and a sweet little face, framed by fluffy golden hair, was looking at me with such bewitching solemnity that I felt strongly moved to take it in my hands and kiss it. Not quite knowing, however, if that would be etiquette, I, instead, asked her if she liked being at the village.

'I don't like it *nearly* as well as my boarding-out home,' she gravely explained. 'Oh, I *was* so sorry to leave, and I *did* cry so. Mother cried, too, and so did Father. You see, I've been there *three* years, and I feel just as if they are my real own mother and father.'

'Did they go to the railway station to see you off?'

'Oh, yes, and so did Grandma and Aunt Cissy, and Ruthie and Bob and Charlie. They were all there. And what *do* you think? The school-teacher came, too, and oh, a heap of the girls in my class!'

'And did the teacher cry?'

'I don't know if she cried at the station, because I didn't see her until the train was going. She and the girls were at the big white gate, and they all waved their handkerchiefs and called out "Good-bye!" as I went past. I never expected to see teacher there, because she said good-bye the day before, when she took me into her room and gave me a *lovely* writing-case, with a lot of envelopes and notepaper; and she had written her name on twelve of the envelopes, and gave me twelve stamps, so I should be sure to write to her if I went to Canada. Teacher

did cry then, because when she put her arms round my neck, and kept kissing me, her cheek was all wet.'

There was no trace of self-consciousness on Violet's sweet and wise little face. I decided that she should be my heroine, even though this seemed almost like stealing, as she obviously was already the heroine of so many other people.

I was telling her to remember, on the ship, to get her English stamps changed for Canadian ones, when Miss Humphreys arrived with another little girl.

I was delighted to notice that Dora Campbell (for such proved to be her name) was no less free from shyness and constraint than Violet. Yet otherwise the two girls appeared sufficiently dissimilar, Dora having dark hair, and a manner which, so far from being quaintly grave, was full of a gentle joyousness.

'I think this village is perfectly sweet,' she exclaimed, 'and isn't everybody kind! Won't it be lovely to see the great big sea and be on our way to beautiful Canada?'

And before she had spoken long in that strain, I perceived that Dora, by reason of her poetical and romantic temperament,

seemed designed by nature to fill the rôle of heroine.

Then there appeared a third Barnardo girl whose character had been developed in an English village—Sarah Jennings her name. Obviously Miss Humphreys was aiming at variety, for Sarah's hair was red, and her demeanour, instead of being grave or gushing, was gay.

'This is just like being at school,' she merrily remarked as, on taking her seat, she folded her hands with mock solemnity. 'But I hope it isn't arithmetic!'

'What would you like it to be?' asked the obliging schoolmaster.

'Oh, geography, please! And for you to tell us all about Canada.'

'The chief cities and principal rivers, and the exports and imports?' I asked.

'Don't be horrid!' protested Sarah. 'No; the things that people really want to know.'

So it was agreed that—by an improvement on the usual method of conducting a class—the pupils should ask the questions, and the teacher should do his best to answer them. As there was no cane handy, I agreed to make shift with the fire-tongs.

'Are there plenty of sweet-stuff shops in Canada?' Sarah led off by asking.

'There aren't any,' I replied; whereupon three pairs of pretty eyes opened wide, incredulity competing with consternation. 'In Canada,' continued the conscientious school-master, 'sweet-stuff is not called "sweet-stuff," but "candy," and shops are not called "shops," but "stores." There are plenty of candy stores in Canada, and you can buy chocolate there, and caramels and butterscotch—in fact, everything that you can buy in an English sweet-shop, besides chewing-gum, toffee made with maple syrup, and a lot of things that are peculiar to Canada and the United States.'

Then Dora introduced the question of snow-shoes, explaining that she wondered how people got them on, as she had seen a pair at a bazaar, and they looked more like musical instruments than anything else; besides which, they were ever so large—and the little arms stretched out to indicate the length of those snow-shoes.

'Oh, I do hope they keep them in girls' sizes,' Sarah broke in. 'I take threes.'

As I watched her laughing eyes, the thought

occurred to me that, as every book was the better for a certain amount of sparkle, I no doubt should be well advised to adopt witty Sarah as my heroine.

'These are the Sisters Way,' Miss Humphreys explained, as she ushered in two dainty little girls with prettily freckled faces.

Nor was it many minutes before Dorothy, the elder, was entertaining us with vivid little anecdotes about their life in the Norfolk village from which they had recently arrived—telling how their Sunday-school had given them a special good-bye tea and two beautiful bibles; how they were going to write to their foster-mother every fortnight when they got to Canada, because she was so nice and so sorry to lose them; and how Sandy the dog had savagely attacked a family of hedgehogs, and at last had come away panting and all bleeding, leaving his victims quite happy and uninjured.

As she passed from one subject to another—her eyes now solemn, now dreamy, and now full of fun—I gratefully noted that Dorothy combined the chief qualities of Violet, Dora and Sarah, and that, being therefore, so to speak, three heroines rolled into

one, she was obviously the best girl for my purpose. Little sister Alice seemed to be just a delightful make-weight thrown in—for Alice, who was obviously devoted to Dorothy, said little, and was one of the prettiest children I have ever seen.

The heroine problem being now so satisfactorily solved, I felt relieved when, on the door re-opening, Miss Humphreys arrived, not with any more children, but with two young lady visitors. The elder, who had a beautiful face of infinite kindness, looked to be a nursing sister or church deaconess. The younger, a fine type of healthy English girlhood, suggested the daughter of a country squire.

I found myself wondering why, when there were so many hundreds of Barnardo girls in the village, they had desired to see the five who had temporarily been allotted to me. But something else caused me still greater wonderment, namely, the fact that Miss Humphreys introduced them by their Christian names—the elder as ‘Gertrude Sibthorp,’ the younger as ‘Mary Ann Sibthorp.’

Judge, however, of my astonishment when Miss Humphreys not only caused the two

sisters to sit in the semicircle, but put her hand on the elder Miss Sibthorp's shoulder and said—

‘ Poor Gertrude is not quite strong enough, the doctor thinks, to go to Canada this year, though he believes she will be able to go next spring. But Gertrude is very good about it, and she does not want to stand in her sister's light, so it has been decided that Mary Ann shall be included in the next party.’

You might, as the saying goes, have knocked me down with a feather. And so these young ladies, with their cultivated manner and signs of gentle breeding, were grown-up Barnardo girls !

If I was surprised, I was still more delighted ; and of course I did not think twice before deciding that Mary Ann, and no other, must be the heroine of my book. Not, mind you, that it by any means followed she would have secured the appointment if her charming sister had been eligible for election.

Miss Humphreys retiring, we resumed our lesson on Canada, the two latest recruits entering most graciously into the spirit of the proceedings ; and I try to think that the pupils were as sorry as the teacher when the

arrival of tea-time caused the school to disperse.

Miss Humphreys was delighted to learn that her labours on my behalf had been crowned with success. But, it seemed, those labours were not yet completed.

'I had a little girl here half an hour ago,' she said, 'whom I should like you to see. But I thought it best not to bring her in, because she lives in the village, and it was arranged you should see only boarding-out girls this afternoon. However, I'll send for her now.'

I thanked Miss Humphreys, but explained that it would be unnecessary, as my choice was made.

'Still,' she persisted, 'there would be no harm in your seeing her. . . . Nelly!' (summoning a child who was waiting within call), 'I wish you'd run round to Oxford Cottage and fetch Phoebe Dawson.'

Ten minutes had elapsed before the door opened and a little girl flew across the carpet and flung herself into Miss Humphreys' arms: 'flew' and 'flung' being the only words that meet the case.

'I was having a bath when Nelly came,'

Phoebe exclaimed. ' But I hurried as quickly as I could ' ; and she abandoned herself to laughing rapture that found expression in crooning sounds.

' And now run and say How-do-you-do to that gentleman. He is going to Canada with you.'

Phoebe, having shot me a quick glance, leapt across the hearthrug and seized my outstretched hands. Then, with her head thrown back, she started to purr and dance with gladness.

When at last Miss Humphreys bade her return to Oxford Cottage, Phoebe darted away on wings, leaving me in some danger of being considered fickle, since the thought possessed my mind that Phoebe, as the very incarnation of human happiness, had an irresistible claim to the position of heroine.

Standing a little later in the front garden of Miss Humphreys' house, I was telling that lady of the new light that had come to me regarding the most suitable girl for my purpose, when there chanced to arrive on the scene a plump little person whom I recognized as the silent Gwenny whose dolls I inspected a few days before.

'And how are you this evening,' was my greeting, 'and how are they all down at Sweetbriar Cottage?'

'Quite well, thank you,' Gwenny replied. 'Oh, and please sir, Edith Murray said if I saw that gentleman again I was to tell you she has changed her mind, and she'll go to Canada in the second party.'

'Is it too late,' I turned eagerly to inquire of Miss Humphreys, 'for Edith to be included in the first party?'

'Yes,' came the reply.

'How very unfortunate!' I lamented.

'But I understood,' protested Miss Humphreys, 'that you were suited!'

'Oh, yes,' I hastened to reply, 'there are others—there are plenty of others.'

And, indeed, it was obvious that Barking-side contained enough heroines to meet the requirements of an entire library of books.

But all the same, in my heart of hearts, I recognized that there was only one Edith Murray.

CHAPTER VIII

SEA-SICKNESS AND A FIGHT

IT was a new scene that met my eyes when, at 8 a.m. on March 14, I stepped out on to the iron stairway at Leopold House and looked down at the crowded playground.

Boys in crimson-braided uniforms no longer monopolized that arena. The animated congregation included a goodly muster of boys dressed in serge suits of several styles, and with variety in the shape of their blue caps. They were not to be distinguished from the pupils of an ordinary middle-class school, save that all their clothes were new and neat, and that each boy carried a bright, unsoiled satchel slung across his back. In a word, they were no longer military-looking Barnardo boys—they were Barnardo boys in mufti. And so there seemed something incongruous in the fact that, while these little civilians were drawn up four deep in martial

order, the little soldiers stood or strolled about the playground as mere spectators.

An open doorway afforded glimpses of empty wagons waiting in the street. Descending into the playground, I could not help seeing some last tremulous farewells between lads in uniforms and lads in serge. With streaming eyes, two boys went hurrying past me to reach obscurity in doorway or passage.

It proved easy enough to locate Smithers and Douglas in the orderly ranks.

'We'll soon be off now, sir,' whispered Smithers, whose face was flushed with excitement. 'I shan't be sorry when we're on the ship and starting.'

Douglas, when I asked if he were glad he was going, replied, 'Yes, sir'—a statement confirmed by the brightest of smiles.

As the boys were streaming out of the doorway, and filling one wagon after another, a matron came up to me and eagerly asked—

'You are going out to Canada with the party, are you not, and you will see some of the boys in their new homes?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, please,' she tearfully entreated, 'look after my Winter.'

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There was no time to go into details, for Mr. Armitage was soon bidding me scramble into the already-loaded last wagon.

From the hundreds of Barnardo boys doomed to stay behind—who were perched on top of the wall, and massed on the roof of the shed—there went up oft-repeated and long-sustained farewell hurrahs as the Canada contingent passed out of their lives.

A charming little boy sat just in front of me, his bright eyes about six inches from the top button of my waistcoat. We were an immense wagon-load, tightly squeezed together. Indeed, it was all I could do to keep on my seat. When the jolting made me slide forward, the boy behind seized the opportunity to get more room. It wasn't merely a case of shoving one youngster back, but about half a ton of youngsters.

Besides the charming boy, and a row of merry little faces on each side of his (as close together as pearls on a necklace), all I could see, on looking sideways to the left, was Mr. Armitage at the back of the wagon, and, on looking sideways to the right, Miss Armitage at the front of the wagon. Each was wearing a spray of pretty flowers, and no doubt for

the same reason that each was trying so hard to smile—just to show how bright and happy they were ! For, of course, the little emigrants must be cheered with a send-off full of animation and gladness.

But over-night I had been in the parlour at Leopold House, and so my eyes could pierce the veil of innocent deception. Ah ! you frank, good, sweet-dispositioned Barnardo children (and the majority are that), I wonder, do you know of the spells you cast on those who succour you ? There are recurring times of sadness for Governors and Mothers of the Homes. To put their thoughts into words, each must often be saying : ' In tending these little ones, and winning their affectionate obedience, I have done my part ; and now they pass hence, in other hands, to life's widening opportunities ; but in that I have dealt lovingly with them, and they have looked trustfully into my eyes, my heart is heavy in the hour of parting.'

Of course, many boys in our wagon *did* know something of those thoughts, for was there not a corresponding weight in their own young hearts ? That is why they, too, made so brave a show of high spirits, ever and anon

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raising a chorus of laughter to compete with the clatter of imprisoned sound on the long ride through the tunnel. Aye, and what an opportunity they found for cheers when, on emerging from that glittering avenue of artificial light, our wagon, from being at the rear of the others, put on a spurt and careered forward to the head of the procession !

And all this while I had with growing interest been watching the charming boy ; and one thing I noticed was that he kept taking from his pocket a round tin box.

‘ What is it ? ’ I asked.

‘ Boot polish,’ he replied, with an engaging smile ; ‘ and, if you come on the ship, I’ll clean your boots for you.’

Which was the beginning of our friendship. Not that I thought any more about the charming boy when we had assembled in the great shed of the Surrey Commercial Docks, where other matters claimed attention. There, alongside, towered the huge steel side of the *S.S. Corinthian*, the Allan liner that was to take us all to Canada. Also Mr. William Baker (Honorary Director of the Homes) was present ; and when the boys had been drawn up in rank and file, he walked slowly along the

lines, speaking kind and cheerful words to all. Then a great stir was caused by the arrival of the contingent of girls (over a hundred strong) from beautiful Barkingside.

'Hullo, sir,' Smithers plucked me by the coat to remark, 'here are the girls come in swell wagonettes, and we only had just common wagons!'

'You learn to be gallant, Smithers,' I answered, on stepping forward to greet Miss Humphreys, who arrived radiant with the knowledge that she had mustered as fine a contingent of little maids as ever crossed the ocean.

A minute later, enthusiastic Phoebe was clinging to my hands and wellnigh dancing on my toes with excitement. Also, I was soon patting my two chubby Katies on the head, and stooping to inquire why the sisters Way, looking so winsome in their dainty pink shawls, had gone completely dumb. But the worst case of self-consciousness was Mary Ann, who, under the influence of her smart travelling clothes, was not only shy, but blushing.

Besides our two battalions of little ones, the shed contained a bewildered congregation of steerage passengers, anxiously floundering

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about with their cumbersome bundles; so that the period of waiting soon grew irksome. But for me it proved memorable because of a pathetic incident. Happening to brush against one of our boy emigrants standing beside a taller lad, I made the distressing discovery that both were sobbing in unrestrained convulsions and that, with heads bent, they were shedding great tears that fell in a shower. Not without difficulty did I extract a clue to their unrestrained grief. Herbert, the elder, had in previous years seen his two other brothers depart for Canada, and now he was saying good-bye to the third. And on my asking why Herbert himself did not go, the answer was dumbly given when he turned his face towards me—a face drawn and twisted by some disfiguring affliction that would doubtless ensure his exclusion from Canada. By way of emphasizing his shortcomings, the poor lad unwound a handkerchief from his right hand, which was revealed as little more than a stump. Meanwhile a woman third-class passenger had come upon the scene, and, considerably upset at sight of those copious tears, was applying herself with motherly zest to calm and comfort

the brothers. And soon I was talking with the Housemaster of the Home in which Herbert resided.

'Owing to neglect,' said the Housemaster, 'the poor boy, when quite a child, was allowed to fall into the fire, from which he received those permanent injuries. And he is such a fine fellow—so reliable and willing, so patient and unselfish, and so very clever! He can use a needle with that stump better than most persons can who have all their fingers.'

Alas! as though it were not a sufficiently hard fate to be maimed and disfigured, he now finds himself debarred from joining his brothers in the beautiful country of his dreams. Oh, the pathos of it!

Down the gangway came the Canadian Superintendent of Dr. Barnardo's Homes, Mr. Alfred B. Owen—the man who was to look after all those children, not only throughout their long sea and railway journey, but throughout the remaining years of their youth—the man who had successfully conducted over a hundred large parties of little ones across the ocean—the man who easily holds the world's record for the number of young emigrants who have been in his charge

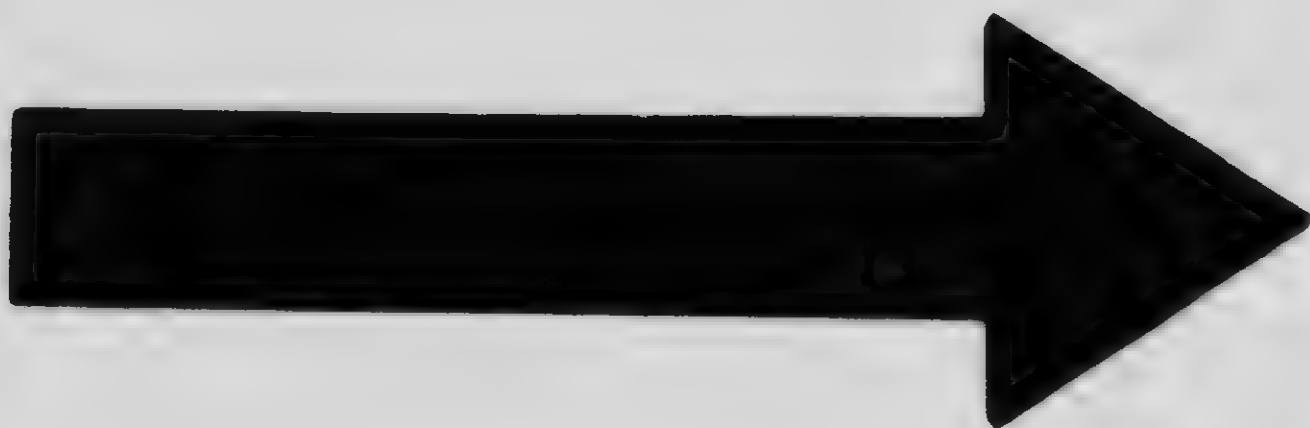
and for the number of young immigrants whose feet he has guided into paths of prosperity in a new land.

Mr. Owen gave the signal, and our three hundred girls and boys streamed on board; and soon was begun a voyage which, I think, will never be forgotten by any one who experienced it. And that for reasons which will presently be revealed.

Going down the Thames was nothing—beyond, of course, the unfolding of a panorama of busy shipping and varied foreshore, which young eyes beheld with critical interest. Rounding the Foreland was also nothing, the event being overshadowed by tea-time. And the *Corinthian* slipped across the English Channel while little travellers, after a long and exciting day, were finding how easy it is to sleep in bedrooms that rock gently to and fro.

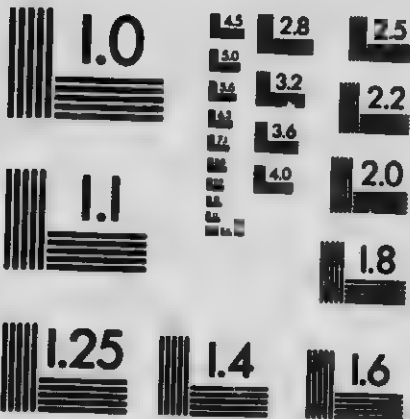
‘Is it true, sir,’ a boy named Clarence Musgrave next day asked me, during our long stay at Havre (to take on French passengers and cargo), ‘that people eat frogs in this country?’

‘Some of them,’ I told him, ‘eat frogs’ legs, nicely cooked’; whereupon Clarence’s frank little face showed great relief



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'Why, a boy told me,' he went on, with raised eyebrows, 'that he saw a man pick up a dead frog and eat it on a piece of bread!'

We all, in our journey through life, find it difficult to acquire accurate knowledge. But a boy among boys is particularly handicapped in his search for reliable information. Before the voyage concluded, I was destined to spend much time in dismissing fables, which were always submitted to my judgment with the earnest words, 'Please, sir, a boy told me,' etc. Thus there were to be ugly rumours that the captain had broken his compass and didn't know where he was going; that two enormous black sharks had been seen over the side; that we had sprung a leak; that the ship's stock of jam was exhausted; with other hair-raising scares of an equally groundless character.

Not, however, that these matters claimed much attention during the early days of the voyage. Once more out in the Channel, we encountered high wind and waves, which made the *Corinthian* pitch and roll. Smithers, when I found him standing against a ventilator on the nearly-deserted deck, took much credit to himself in that he had eaten a good break-

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fast and was looking forward eagerly to dinner.

'But,' he complained, 'it's awkward not being able to walk about! What's more, I'd like to see the sun come out—I'm tired of this cold wind'; and, frowning at the weather, he turned up his overcoat collar.

'Oh, Smithers,' I said, 'how can you talk like that? Don't you know what is going on below?'

'Should think I did!' he answered in disgust. 'There they are laying about with white faces, more dead than alive, and if you give one a shove, he don't take any notice. Bah! they're nice ones to come for a voyage. But I've been to sea before, and it never upsets me.'

'No, Smithers,' I said, 'and if you knew what you are missing, you would feel too grateful to complain about small discomforts.'

'But the wind is so chilly!' said frowning Smithers.

Whereupon I left him, and, holding on tight at every step, I descended to the great between-decks area, where, on one side of the ship, a broad promenade extended beside the sleeping berths of the boys, and where, on the other side of the ship, an equally wide promen-

ade extended beside the sleeping berths of the girls ; those two sections being approached by separate stairways from the open deck above. And so I arrived in a long corridor where one could retain a sure foothold only by hanging on to something. Two stewards were slowly and cautiously advancing along that corridor in a faltering, staggering fashion, their bodies seldom parallel with the walls, but leaning at comical angles to one side or the other, as equilibrium was adjusted to the roll of the ship. When I set out to walk along the corridor, I kept slipping sideways and went floundering, now against the wooden wall of the boys' berths, now against the stack of lashed life-belts on the other side.

Having proceeded about fifty yards, and passed the galley (where the eye assisted another organ to a knowledge that meat was being cooked in wholesale quantities), I came to where the corridor opened on the right upon a broad area furnished with many rows of long tables, associated with forms for little passengers to sit on. But that hall of feasting looked, at the moment, more like the outpatients' ward of a hospital. Boys lay on the floor, boys lay on the forms, boys sat singly

or in clusters, with their heads on the tables. Scarcely one stirred. They all seemed mesmerized.

Going to and fro among them, and looking carefully, at last I found my little Douglas. But one glance at his pale, pathetic face snowed me that the only kindness one could render him was to leave him undisturbed.

Poor little sufferers ! There was, however, nothing to be done. So I set about the laborious task of retracing my steps ; on the way meeting Sister Gerrie, the party's nurse, who, pausing only to report that many lay sick in their bunks, went sliding off to her multifarious tasks.

Passing my starting point—the foot of the stairway—I continued along the further stretch of corridor, where another widened area proved also to be furnished with tables and forms. Here I found a second group of woe-begone little figures. But what particularly took my attention was a black, lumpy lot of something lying hard by, on the tarpaulin cover of a large square platform raised about a foot from the floor—that being, obviously, the battened-down opening to the

hold of the ship. On my drawing near, the dark, irregular mass proved to be a conglomeration of collapsed boys, lying just anyhow in a complicated, interlaced confusion of arms, legs and heads.

Noting a small vacant space at the edge of the platform, I went quietly and sat down there, in the midst of those unmurmuring invalids. Then, stooping to one of the nearest heads, I whispered—

‘Well, my little man, you are feeling better now, aren’t you?’

Two small arms were drawn in, and the raised face, supported from elbows, looked at me with a brave little pale smile.

‘Oh, yes, sir—much better, thank you. And I wasn’t only sick twice. There’s some’—and he spoke with grave compassion—‘who’ve been awful bad.’

It was my friend Teddy Brown, whose acquaintance I made as we came down the Thames. Teddy’s face is not round and pink and pretty, like some boys’, because Teddy, when he was quite little (as I have since been told), was not looked after so well as some boys are; but when Teddy talks to you, you see how unselfish he is; so Teddy has some-

thing that is very much better than a pretty face—a beautiful character.

At the sound of voices, other little figures half raised themselves, and other faces—some that I knew—turned in my direction. There, for instance, was the face of Clarence, previously so bright, now so white. He did not speak in words, but I read the message in his pathetic eyes: 'I'm not feeling very well, sir, so please excuse me if I do not smile.' His head sank back and he once more was still.

'George Tims has been terrible bad,' whispered Teddy.

'Where is he?' I eagerly whispered; for George Tims, as I had meanwhile learnt, was the name of the charming boy. Teddy pointed to such a mixed-up group that I had to ask for better guidance. Then soon was I bending down to a little recumbent face that had looked so different on the wagon. He heard my voice and opened one dizzy eye; but only after some coaxing did I extract the single faltering word—'Headache.'

The forethought of the Allan Line had contrived that cool, sweet air should have free passage down that between-decks area, which, in other ships, often imprisons warm fumes

from furnace fires. Also I noticed that the cabin partitions reached a height of only some eight feet, so that the children's sleeping quarters were open to the refreshing atmosphere flowing overhead. Thus the conditions were favourable to the measures that were adopted—thanks to Mr. Owen's ripe experience—for shortening the period of seasickness.

Advantage being taken of a slight improvement in the weather, all who could do so were urged to go on deck—aye, and to make a brave fight of it, by holding themselves erect, when they got there ; care being taken to put no pressure on those seriously affected by the disorder. As a result, the majority soon stood cut in the open, and, like plucky little Englishmen, were making the best of a state of affairs which necessitated frequent staggering to the gunwale.

I was in a measure reassured to find Douglas among those who were standing erect. But he was obviously in a tottery and precarious condition. While I was attempting to encourage and console him, Smithers came up and interjected some remarks that were of a humorous, rather than a sympathetic, char-

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acter. So it was in no very hopeful spirit that, not for the first time, I bade the elder boy look after the younger.

Next day, on the sun coming out, many of the pathetic cases were induced to come on deck, and recline, warmly wrapped up, in the restorative air. As a consequence, when a meal-hour arrived, something very like a full muster of youngsters gathered at the tables, even though—capacity proving weaker than desire—many places at the unfestive board were prematurely vacated.

The spirit of hardihood advanced rapidly among our little friends, and by the third day some of them discovered that sea-sickness possessed, if not an attractive, at any rate a competitive side.

‘I’ve been bad ten times, sir,’ proudly remarked a boy named Johnny Dale.

‘Yah!’ asserted little Jimmy, of Babies’ Castle, ‘I’ve been bad seventeen times!’

I do hope he was exaggerating. Yet one could believe almost anything of Jimmy. With a head the size of a quartern loaf, he is, I think, the most affectionate child I have ever met. But it came upon me as a surprise that Jimmy was a poor sailor, and I will tell

you why. That day he had been one of two boys (Smithers being the other) who had remained busy at the dinner-table when the rest of the diners had gone. Indeed, it came to pass that the same two outstayed all competitors again at tea-time ; and, in an aside to Mr. Loftin (one of Mr. Owen's assistants), I commented on Jimmy's obvious appreciation of the good things set before him.

'He's a regular marvel,' said observant Mr. Loftin, speaking in an awed whisper. 'Never in my life did I see a boy with a better appetite. And, mind you, he has been as ill as any of them, and is far from right even now. But it doesn't make a bit of difference to Jimmy. He hasn't missed a meal.'

The knowledge that Douglas was convalescent came to me in rather a dramatic way. Arriving on the crowded deck, I noted with displeasure that two boys were fighting—a thing which had not previously occurred on the ship to my knowledge. At once I stepped forward to end the fray—when who should the combatants prove to be but Douglas and Smithers ! A humiliation indeed for their grown-up friend !

Alas for our presumptuous hopes when,

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forgetful of the limitations of youth, we set up ideals too exalted for the little ones to realize. Goodness knows I ought to have been satisfied with the sterling, and indeed heroic, qualities which Smithers had revealed in the dark chapter of his life that was closed two months before. All my experience of him had gone to show that his personal sufferings—as the one starving boy in a happy multitude of well-fed schoolmates—had, as was inevitable, driven his sympathies inward rather than outward. Had he been of the prosperous majority, and himself discovered the starving boy, the power of impersonal sympathy would, I am sure, have been awakened in his breast. For Smithers is thoroughly sound at heart.

You will notice that I had been endeavouring to establish an artificial relationship between the two boys—bidding Smithers, in effect, play the part of elder brother, and ministering guardian, to little sea-sick Douglas. A very pretty idea, no doubt! But my two real live boys refused to be Sandford and Merton. Human nature insisted on asserting itself; and it was my rude awakening to find nurse and patient punching each other's heads in a frenzy of mutual antagonism.

An astonishing feature of this unexpected affair lay in the fact that Douglas was, as the saying goes, getting the best of it. I am a long way from being an authority on the ignoble art of pugilism ; yet it was obvious, even to me, that the younger boy was displaying the greater science. With head neatly ducked, he was delivering a succession of swift blows which hindered the play of Smithers' arms and, indeed, restricted him mainly to measures of a merely defensive character.

And here—if the reader will pardon a brief digression—I may record that, on my describing the incident some weeks later to the little fellow's uncle, that worthy Canadian settler exclaimed : ' Oh, yes, Alfred very likely would have some quickness with his fists, seeing his father, in years gone by, was a champion light-weight boxer.' Nor, having once more recalled that unhappy man to the reader's mind, could I find a better place for this last sad word concerning him : on the day before we sailed, the news arrived at Stepney Causeway that the father of Douglas had passed away.

In the surprise of finding my two boys

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fighting, I am afraid I was too upset to adjudicate very wisely on the quarrel that had sprung up between them.

'Why, you naughty boys!' I exclaimed, when I had one on either side of me as we leaned against the gunwale. 'What do you mean by such disgraceful conduct?'

'He begun it!' declared Smithers, whose chest was heaving and his face deeply flushed.

'Yes,' hissed panting Douglas, 'because he took my paper!' and, if you please, the young firebrand sprang past me, with his little fists outstretched, to resume the encounter.

'Alfred!' I protested, as I grabbed him by the collar and returned him to his position, 'how dare you! . . . Now perhaps you'll both tell me what this is all about.'

'What did he want to take my paper for?' half screamed little Douglas.

'Well, he only picked it up,' replied Smithers, his voice breaking with emotion.

'What good was it?'

Bidding them both speak in a lower and calmer key, I proceeded to cross-examine them with some care, establishing the following facts:—Douglas had held in his hand the torn half of an envelope he had found on the

deck ; Smithers took it from him and tossed it into the sea ; and Douglas (while making no pretence that the discarded fragment of stationery possessed any special value for him) had been incensed at the loss of something in which he felt he had acquired proprietary rights.

In other words, they had been quarrelling about nothing—just like two grown-up people ; and, having dismissed the misdemeanants with instructions to keep away from one another, and try to be better boys, I retired to my cabin to ponder the new situation that had arisen. Nor could I free myself from an ugly misgiving that, though it had been so easy to blame the boys, I must probably look nearer home for the real author of the breach of the peace that had occurred.

My interest in those two Barnardo boys, instead of forming a tie of friendship (as I so fondly hoped), was obviously a cause of rancour between them. Nor could I doubt that the torn envelope, so far from originating the conflagration of youthful anger, had but fanned the fires of jealousy that had long been smouldering. It was not permitted me to see in what way I had erred in my treat-

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ment of those lads, to whom it had been my endeavour to deal out favours with an even hand. Presumably, however, I had erred, and certainly I must try and err no more, especially as, since the voyage began, the number of my Barnardo boy friends had increased from two to about twenty, and was daily growing.

CHAPTER IX

ADVENTURES ON THE ATLANTIC

GEORGE TIMS was one of the last to linger abed, his trials softened by Sister's tireless ministrations, assisted by beef tea, dry biscuits and milk chocolate. But on the fifth day, when I mingled with the multitude of high-spirited girls and boys who thronged the heaving deck, happy tidings were brought to me by Kenneth Morgan, a thoroughbred little English boy to whom, because of his sweet disposition and expression, I was becoming strongly attached.

'George Tims is up to-day, sir,' Kenneth eagerly reported, 'and he's been round to the barber's and bought Stanley Lockwood a shilling's worth of postcards.'

That was so like my prodigal little nine-year-old prince of a boy! It would be almost inevitable that George should celebrate his convalescence with an act of generosity. And, as I further reflected, if such a windfall

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as twelve postcards were to be had, how natural that Stanley should secure the prize. For Stanley (one of Jimmy's contemporaries and colleagues from Babies' Castle) is this sort of child : he has an engaging face of pink and dimpled innocence that wins all hearts, and none the less because he is endowed with a resourceful nimbleness and a gift for fisticuffs such as are vouchsafed to few mortals who have seen only seven birthdays.

With my usual retinue of clinging youngsters, I moved through the throng in search of Stanley, whom at last we located in the lamp-room, where he was engaged in one of his periodical encounters with the huge sailor who presided over that chamber of oil, tools and glittering reflectors. A marline-spike in one hand and a grease-rag in the other, Stanley was making things warm for the doting mariner, who at the moment was adopting defensive measures with a fire shovel. Nor, on court-martialling the young delinquent, was I greatly surprised to learn that he had bartered four of the postcards for a piece of chocolate, that he had lost three others, and hopelessly crumpled the remainder. And he said he didn't care !

The girls had emerged from the sea-sick stage more slowly than did the boys. Indeed, three days elapsed without any of the Barkingside contingent appearing on deck. Going below to learn what had become of them, I met strains of vocal music in their corridor, and soon came upon a happy muster of girls reclining on deck chairs, sitting on stools and squatting on the floor. Very gently and sweetly they were singing old English folk-songs to assist forgetfulness of the discomfort a sea voyage is apt to cause.

However, it was not long before nearly all the girls were out on deck in the invigorating salt air; but I have to record, regretfully and almost apologetically, that, except in one case, my Barkingside friendships did not develop on the voyage. Every now and then, walking amid the juvenile multitude, I would see Mary Ann, or the sisters Way, or Violet Fleming, or one of my other heroines, and when I asked them how they were getting on they would reply, 'Quite well, thank you'; and there the matter ended.

For one thing, they were too taken up with their merry gossiping, and their books, and their skipping, and the beautiful blue sea,

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to be much interested in a staid old grown-up like me ; moreover, I was never able to give them my whole attention, always being but a central figure to which several boys were clinging. You see, the boys, having been on deck two days ahead of the girls, had established prior claims on my attention. Then, too, I don't stand in the same awe of little boys as I do of little girls, especially pretty little girls. And dozens of our happy, smiling little girls were so pretty that I should much have liked to pick them up, one after another, and kiss them ; only I felt Mr. Owen might think that was not the right way for me to behave.

The one little girl with whom I improved my acquaintance was Phœbe. At sea, no less than on land, was she a little dancing bunch of human happiness. Boys or no boys, she would dart forward, capture my hands and straightway start jumping and dancing. How her little tongue would wag about wonderful Canada, and the fact that she would see her mother there ! ' Isn't it lovely ! ' was an exclamation ever on her lips.

All this time, you must know, the Atlantic Ocean was angry and obstructive. Immense

grey waves, capped with white streaks of flying foam, kept sweeping by, and the *Corinthian* went up and down, this way and that, as she staggered onward amid the unending hills of rushing water. It was half a gale that put the sea in such commotion, and, as bad luck would have it, that half a gale was coming the way we were going. So our ship met the full force of wind and waves, which did their best to push her back.

When those unfavourable conditions prevail, the only thing for a captain to do, if he is to maintain any reasonable degree of speed, is to direct that coal be shovelled unsparingly into the furnaces, in order that the propeller may rotate with extra power. Captain Bamber—the kindly and wise commander of the *Corinthian*—was not in a position to do so. The great strike of miners in England, while it had prevented many ships from getting any coal at all, had been the means of restricting our supply to such number of hundred tons as would meet ordinary requirements on an Atlantic voyage. So our engineer felt he had no alternative, while a high wind opposed us, but to burn only such small quantity of fuel as would suffice to keep the vessel

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on her course. He and the captain naturally supposed that the wind would soon either abate in violence or shift to a more friendly quarter—an expectation, however, in which they were destined to be disappointed. The hostile weather continued, with scarcely an hour's interruption, for close on a fortnight—a fact that prolonged our voyage to nearly double the normal duration.

This lengthening of the trip proved greatly to the advantage of our little travellers, who so early had their sea legs and sea appetites. The ship's bakers, cooks and stewards had a very busy time. Thrice a day innumerable large rolls and immense quantities of roast beef, stew, porridge, pudding and jam, together with soup, cocoa, oranges, milk and I know not what, disappeared from sight with a quickness that suggested conjuring; and several boys, Smithers among the number, grew visibly fatter day by day.

The vigorous sea air, and the occasional visitations of glorious Atlantic sunshine, bronzed the faces of the boys and made the girls' cheeks rosy—the latter fact greatly adding to the happiness of Mrs. Lloyd, the ever-busy and ever-smiling Mother of our

little maids. An added source of health for the lads was a morning dip in the briny, the thoughtful Allan Line having provided a spacious canvas swimming-bath that was filled direct from the sea.

Very sweet it was to hear all those little voices raised daily in song and praise ; and it is the simple fact that our dear Barnardo children assembled with enthusiasm at their happy Sabbath services.

Before we had been a week at sea, the boys gave a concert, and while it was going on I had a strange adventure. But the reader will best understand about that adventure if I begin by telling him something about the barber's shop.

The barber's shop was in one of the corridors running through the ship—so saloon passengers could reach it from one end of the corridor, and Barnardo boys could reach it from the other end. Everybody who wanted to be shaved went to the barber's shop—though it was not for that purpose Barnardo boys kept going there. The fact is, the barber, besides cutting hair, sold sweets—not to mention hairpins, postcards, tooth-powder and hat-guards.

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Well, one afternoon I was in the barber's shop with George Tims, when another boy arrived and, holding out a two-shilling-piece, said: 'Look what I just picked up! I wonder whose it is.'

Taking charge of the coin, I undertook to restore it to the finder on the following afternoon if in the meantime the loser had not been identified.

'Do you agree to that?' I asked the boy.

'Yes, sir,' he briskly replied; 'that's quite fair'; and as he spoke I found myself puzzling over an expression of his face that seemed familiar.

'Haven't I seen you before somewhere?'

'Why, of course you have!' exclaimed the boy, breaking into a broad smile that stretched from ear to ear. 'I thought you'd forgotten! Don't you remember coming to Long Melford and seeing me and Willie?'

'Pat, my boy'—and I hastened to shake hands with an old acquaintance—'you really must forgive me. But it isn't surprising that I didn't know you at first. You're looking a lot more cheerful than when I saw you last.'

'Oh, yes,' he laughed, 'we thought you

had come to take us away. And it wasn't long afterwards before the Homes *did* send for us.'

'Are you sorry?'

'Not now, sir! But I was at the time, and so was Willie.'

'Is he on the ship, too?'

'No, he said he wanted to be a sailor, so they sent him up to the Naval School in Norfolk. I said I wanted to come to Canada, and be a farmer.'

'Well, Pat,' I remarked, before he ran back to his deck-load of playmates, 'I hope it will be possible to make you wealthy to-morrow.'

Then, having instructed the barber to let me know if any customer announced the loss of half a dollar, I repaired to Mr. Owen's office, bent on learning whether any rule or custom clashed with the arrangement I had entered into with Pat.

'No,' busy Mr. Owen turned from his papers to reply, 'that will be all right. But look here—I've just been arranging for a concert that the boys will be giving to-night; and you are to take the chair and deliver a short preliminary address.'

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Whereupon, exercising the privilege of a grown-up, I refused to do as I was bid. As far as making a speech was concerned, I refused for the same reason that I should have refused—even at an order from the Captain—to climb up the rigging and affix a streamer at the mast-head; the reason being that the job was out of my line. As for taking the chair—well, I wanted to sit among the audience. That is much better fun, as I realized on the last occasion of my attending a Barnardo function.

That function (if I may parenthetically recall it) was the annual concert of the Old Boys' Guild, held in the Edinburgh Castle; and my friend Mr. Harry Davies, the honorary secretary, sent me a ticket for a seat on the platform. I preferred to sit in the audience, and found myself plumb in the midst of an enthusiastic muster of black-coated young men—obviously shop-assistants, clerks, warehousemen and the like—each of whom in days gone by had been a Smithers or a Douglas. Not for a seat on the most exalted platform would I have missed the inspiring revelation of manliness that came from rubbing shoulders with those fine fellows. I

overheard them recalling happy memories of the Homes, and every now and then proof was forthcoming of the eager interest they took in the present generation of Barnardo boys—confidences being exchanged as to the subscriptions they were able to send to Stepney Causeway. No Eton boy grown to man's estate could be prouder of his former school than were those grateful, and loyal-hearted, young men of their early connexion with Dr. Barnardo's Homes. One arrived late, and, on being taken to task for his unpunctuality, rendered the following account of himself: 'How it happened I don't know, but I clean forgot that this was Old Boys' Night. I was sitting down to tea when my landlady started to say she thought I'd got an engagement at Limehouse. Jump! I was out of the chair, and on with my coat and hat before she'd hardly got the words out. Singing out that I didn't want any tea, I ran out of the house and nipped six miles across London as quick as the tube and a taxi could carry me. My! I haven't missed an Old Boys' Annual yet, but it was a close shave to-night.'

Therefore, as I say, when Mr. Owen asked

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me to preside over the concert, I returned a polite but firm refusal, coupled with a suggestion that he should perform the duty himself, since, as he was already so overlastingly busy, an extra job or two could make little difference.

And so it came about that, arriving at the concert just as Mr. Owen was about to open the proceedings, I cast around for a seat in the crowded auditorium ; for the two hundred expectant boys were massed in the area where, at meal times, only half that number could be accommodated. Several of my little friends beckoned me to come and sit beside them. But, as they were in different parts of the concert hall, it was impossible to oblige them all. Clarence happened to be the nearest, and so I went and sat next to that bright little dickey-bird of a boy. And very soon a succession of our accomplished young people were giving us songs, recitations, and selections on the cornet ; though one of the most successful features of the entertainment was contributed accidentally by outsiders.

Attracted by the music, a number of stokers and firemen, who were occupying

their leisure in an adjoining compartment of the ship, erected for themselves some sort of temporary structure, standing on which, and peering over the top of the partition, they were enabled to see what was going on. All went well until, their hearts touched by a sentimental ballad sung by a Barnardo boy, they started to clap their hands—a demonstration which affected the equilibrium of the platform supporting them, so that they all abruptly and simultaneously disappeared amid a commotion of collapsing timber. As the incident caused no anxiety (the grimy mariners having not very far to fall), it caused emotion of another sort—the rippling chorus of Barnardo boy laughter being long continued. It turned, however, into a congratulatory cheer when, matters having been adjusted on the other side of the barricade, the row of faces reappeared, though with somewhat more sober expressions than they had previously worn.

And now I come to my strange adventure. It will be understood that, the entire party being compressed into an area where sitting accommodation was provided for only half the number, many of the audience were

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reduced to the expedient of squatting on the floor; and it will also be understood that boys in that lowly situation would feel themselves under no obligation to abide throughout the proceedings in one place, particularly if it were a place that did not command a view of the performers. Every now and then, boys might be seen migrating from spot to spot; and therefore, on turning my head at the conclusion of a vocal encore, it did not surprise me that Kenneth should be on his feet, and on the move, a few yards away. As the reader has been told, Kenneth is a great favourite of mine—wherefore it was only natural that I should at once telegraph him a pressing invitation to come and deposit himself at my feet. His face radiant with responsive friendship, he came quickly to me, yet not so quickly but that I had time to realize, before he arrived, that he was not Kenneth after all. On a near view, indeed, he did not very closely resemble Kenneth. Moreover, so far from being one of my favourites, he had hitherto been part of the multitude to me, since this was the first time I had consciously looked into his face.

It was a peculiar and delightful experience ;

for while I must have mirrored the warm personal esteem I felt for Kenneth, he mirrored the gladness with which he accepted friendly overtures that he could not but suppose were directed towards himself. Yet (for the human countenance is more sensitive to reflect subtleties of thought than are English idioms to express them) his confident gladness was qualified by a passing shade of doubt that was partly surprise. But the hint of uncertainty in his manner was swiftly banished. For if I was mistakenly beckoning Kenneth while he was coming, I enthusiastically welcomed himself when he arrived. One more friend ! One more of our Barnardo family, out of his rich store of pent-up affection, was going to like the grown-up, and gladden him with personal smiles. One more spinning of the golden thread that connects earth with the Great Elsewhere.

For the only thing we know about the three great mysteries of life, love and eternity are that they are intimately associated one with another.

‘What is your name ?’ I asked the little fellow, who was now comfortably ensconced at my feet.

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'John Clark,' he replied; and when he looked into my face I knew that, travelling in coming years to remote parts of the earth, I should often think of that boy, growing to manhood on a Canadian farm, and he would sometimes think of me.

And so I turned to enjoy another song with the comfortable knowledge that, since the last one was sung, I had gained new riches. But the strange part of this adventure has yet to be told.

When the song was over, and while my latest friend still sat quietly on the floor before me, I turned to the right and saw him standing and smiling about two yards away. You may think I am wandering in my mind; but this is a bald statement of something that occurred during anno domini 1912 on the ss. *Corinthian* out in mid-Atlantic.

In an earlier chapter Smithers was spoken of as a duplicated boy, because he seemed to have two personalities. Here was another sort of duplicated boy—this time with two bodies.

Acting on the surprise and spur of the moment, I mechanically did what I had already done—namely, signalled him to come

and occupy floor space before me—despite the fact that he was already doing so. Eagerly and gratefully smiling, just as he had done before, he once more accepted my invitation, so that now (it was difficult even to think grammatically) both of him were at my feet.

Since we were doing everything all over again, of course I said—

‘What is your name?’

‘Willie Clark,’ he replied.

Thus at last a variation was introduced in the repeated sequence of events; and I knew that, instead of one, I had gained two new friends—brothers.

‘Well, you *do* look alike!’ I said, with a hand on a shoulder of each.

And the two faces looked up together, both smiling in the same key of grateful happiness; and the two boys replied, in unison—

‘We are twins, sir.’

At the break-up of the gathering, other boys came in for their share of attention, but my new possessions, I was delighted to find, remained within hail; and every time I turned to either of them, the impression was deepened of an element of gratitude in the

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awakened smile. To gain an accidental glimpse of the face before it was illumined, was to detect a suggestion of pathos in the pensive expression—a hint of some underlying sadness which had bred a shrinking humility.

That humility, associated with the grateful smile, moved me to a strong interest in the two lads, who were obviously of a gentle disposition and linked together by ties of deep affection.

On the following day, words were spoken which gave an appalling clue to the shadow that had lain across those two young lives, and left its impress on their demeanour.

Mr. Owen permitted me to be present in his office at the individual interviews he had with his boys—interviews at which he gained some knowledge of their ambitions, capacities and characters, so that from his long list of applications he could choose for each a home that promised suitable guardianship and opportunities, besides being in a locality readily accessible to any relative the new-comer might have in Canada.

A fondness for children implies a talent for winning their confidence; and in Mr.

Owen's case that talent, because his life has been spent in exercising it, has been developed into something I can only call by the name of genius.

It is the same—if I may be permitted momentarily to branch off from an unfinished story—with others of that devoted band of child lovers with whom, since setting out to write this book, I had been brought in contact; a group of men and women who have been a revelation almost as interesting as the boys and girls themselves—one enthusiasm and one spirit pervading all, yet each with sympathies developed by the particular function he or she fills in the vast Barnardo organization.

Howard Williams—charged with the heavy responsibility of bringing the Association's income to the level of its expenditure—remains vividly in my memory as I saw him one afternoon in the counting-house of the large City firm over which he presides. How gladly he dropped his pen, and how swiftly the larger interest was reflected on his face when he found that his visitor had come to talk, not about business, as was a natural first surmise, but about the Barnardo work.

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Nor am I unmindful of his insistence on the importance of that work as viewed from a strictly business standpoint—of his trenchant testimony concerning the splendid value secured to the nation and the Empire by transforming the unloved little ones, who promised to become a public burden and a clog on the wheels of national progress, into productive citizens who would swell the volume of British prosperity.

‘What more remunerative investment could there be,’ he exclaimed, ‘than that of spending £10 on emigrating a child to Canada, and placing him or her on the highroad to independence over there? Compare that with the annual charge of £40 to maintain a child in an English institution, slowly to be trained for the precarious openings offered over here. This Barnardo emigration is a sound commercial enterprise, with each little emigrant figuring on the balance-sheet like a bale of merchandise. The work is vindicated in the appeal it makes to the head—one can leave the heart out of the matter altogether.’

Yes, yes, of course one can—if one could. Also as I write I think of William Baker,

with all the boys and all the girls nestling within the wide scope of his love and compassion—the paternal veteran who is never so happy as when, walking amid a congregation of his smiling children, he stoops now to caress a little damask cheek, now to pat a little close-cropped head, his lips ever murmuring words of comfort, counsel and good cheer. Then, too, my thoughts turn to William McCall, a man of affairs, sparing in speech, whose trained business intellect ensures that the great organization shall be administered on lines of economy and efficiency. Another of the devoted band comes to my mind, namely, W. W. Hind Smith, who has charged himself with the task of acquainting prosperous school-children with the needs and worth of British boys and girls born to harsh conditions; and of the fruits of his lectures and addresses the *Corinthian* carried a sample in the ten Barnardo girls, and seventeen Barnardo boys, whose expenses had been paid by pocket-money of the pupils in twenty-seven public schools and colleges of the old land—institutions to which the little settlers would remain individually linked by the ties of mutual interest

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that an exchange of correspondence must create.

And now, with profuse apologies for the above digression, I would recall the reader's attention to interviews that took place in Mr. Owen's office, where boys of all dispositions found themselves absolutely at their ease and eager to impart the information his kindly inquiries invited. The questions were largely directed to ascertain each little fellow's age, his school standard and the range of his urban or rural experiences. He was also asked if he desired to be located near any relative or acquaintance who might be already in Canada. Incidentally there was a little gentle probing as to personal knowledge of circumstances that led to his reception in the Homes.

A few, but only a few, of the little fellows revealed themselves as Poor Law children recently handed over to the Barnardo organization. Would that more Boards of Guardians could realize the wisdom and economy of emigrating their young charges to Canada!

When my little twins stood before Mr. Owen, it will readily be believed that, seated unheeded in the background, I listened eagerly

to what took place. And this was the unforgettable part of the conversation—

‘Are your father and mother alive?’

‘We don’t know, sir,’ said John.

‘When did you see them last?’

‘Three years ago,’ said Willie, ‘when they were sent to prison.’

‘Do you know why they were sent to prison?’

‘Yes, sir—it was because of the way they treated us.’

Alas! several of our lads proved to be victims whose sufferings had led to prosecutions for cruelty. But I felt sick and stunned, as from a blow in the face, on learning that my fine little affectionate twins had been subjected to black, blind brutality, and from the pair of grown-ups who should have caressed and adored them. Oh, the dark mysteries of human frailty and folly! What devil’s work is done in this world, where, however, happily the forces of heaven are warring triumphantly against the forces of hell. Contact with the Barnardo work at least gives you that assurance, amid the shocks to your feelings that come with a knowledge of the little ones’ past experiences.

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The smiles of those rescued children—it is, surely, no great stretch of fancy to suppose—are as glory light reflected from wings of the protecting angels who hover above them.

And soon, the interviews having come to an end, I was basking anew in the sunshine of those smiles. Nor was it long before, on one boy's face, I was to behold a great jolly Irish smile; for, all efforts failing to identify the saloon passenger who had been careless with his currency, it became my privilege to restore the two-shilling-piece as treasure trove to delighted Pat.

Nor must I omit to mention another incident of that day. It was the evening hour when, the bulk of our young people having retired for the night, only the elder boys lingered on deck. Suddenly remembering a commission with which a lady at Leopold House had charged me, I scanned the surrounding faces, intent on deciding which young fellow would be most likely to serve my need. Choice fell on a tall youth with a pleasing perpendicular profile, and an expression that suggested good-nature and good principles associated with diffidence.

'Can you help me,' I asked him, 'to find a boy named Winter?'

Well might he smile on realizing how simple was the task I had set him.

'I *am* Winter,' he was in a position to reply; whereupon I told him that, some time during the next few months, I would look him up at his Canadian home, just to satisfy myself he was getting along as nicely as I felt sure he would be.

What fine times I had, to be sure, with my ever-widening circle of intimate personal friends! Especially memorable were the half-hours when, after the evening sluicing and soapings, they came clustering around me—as a dense ring of clean, pink, shining faces—for a last exchange of confidences before going to bed. My dear twins were sure to be there, with George Tims, and Kenneth Morgan, and Clarence Musgrave, and Teddy Brown, and Jimmy, and Stanley Lockwood—yes, and with ever so many more besides—little pets and princes all!

Often they would make me renew a promise to be the uncle of I don't know how many. My dear twins extracted a sort of half promise that I would try to be their

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daddy. That preposterously affectionate young Jimmy one night went the length of asking me to be his mother. But that is where I had to draw the line.

The boys had one mild grievance against me. Having seen icebergs on every previous occasion of my crossing the Atlantic, I had promised my little friends that they would look upon those forms of dazzling whiteness. When the chart showed us to be well within the ice-fields to the south of Newfoundland, the encircling expanse of sea was repeatedly scanned, but our eager lads were destined to be cheated of the expected sensation.

That there should have been disappointment because we fell in with no iceberg was to become a memory full of strange significance. For, sixteen days later, traversing those same waters, the great *Titanic* did fall in with an iceberg, and in consequence all mankind was appalled by the most piteous marine tragedy in the history of the world.

With attendant dolphins leaping in the waves, and a cloud of gulls circling in our wake, the *Corinthian* ploughed on and on until outlying portions of Nova Scotia loomed mistily as a distant streak of purple; and,

when night had fallen, we anchored outside the New Brunswick harbour of St. John—visible as a line of lights.

All on board were early astir next morning, and I found our multitude of eager children looking particularly smart in their well-brushed clothes, and with boots that had just been polished by a squad of obliging stewards.

‘But,’ said George Tims, faithful to a promise that I myself had forgotten, ‘I’m going to do yours myself’; and, producing a brush from one pocket, and his tin of polish from the other, he knelt on deck and got to work. ‘I shouldn’t think,’ added the motherly little fellow, ‘of letting you go on shore with boots like that.’

A tug brought out the medical officer of the port, who examined our three hundred children one by one and pronounced them all hale, hearty and duly vaccinated. Then the *Corinthian* moved slowly through cold air to the quayside of a city where patches of belated snow were visible in the glorious sunshine.

CHAPTER X

LIFE IN A TRAIN

MOTIONLESS at last, and moored alongside a great wharf, the *Corinthian* shot out its springy gangways; and our three hundred young people gathered like a swarm of buzzing bees about the gunwale. They had come to a new chapter of their adventures, and each little Christopher Columbus was itching to feel the New World under the soles of his feet.

But first the French mails had to be put ashore. Then came the bustling operation of landing the passengers' baggage, which included a great barricade of Barnardo boxes, each belonging to the indicated boy or girl whose clothes, books and other personal property it contained. Finally the hold was unbattened, and a combination of shrieking engines, creaking cranes and shouting men caused the Allan liner to disgorge her cargo of merchandise.

At last the time came when our little ones, after an early midday meal, went streaming down the gangway, to form an orderly phalanx in the great shed, whence, under Mr. Owen's adroit generalship, they marched to the Immigration Hall. Here a long pause preceded and followed an impressive experience. The Dominion Government, acting through three officials, subjected each of our boys and each of our girls—as well as Sister Gerrie, Mrs. Lloyd, Mr. Loftin, the writer of these pages, and even Mr. Owen himself—to individual scrutiny and interrogation, to make sure that we were all healthy, good-looking, nicely behaved and properly vaccinated—in other words, that none of us were likely to become, through laziness or other disease, a burden on the rates of Canada. The three officials discharged their very necessary duties in a manner that was no less courteous than conscientious; and I am able to record that—thanks to the care with which the Barnardo Association had selected their little emigrants—not one of us was denied admission to the Land of Opportunity.

While the C.P.R. were preparing a special

train for the reception of our party, the Government kindly allotted us the exclusive use of a warm, light and spacious hall, in which three hundred jubilant young emigrants disported themselves for over an hour, during which time I found myself involved in a heroic, but unpremeditated, feat of penmanship.

As on a previous occasion of my arriving in Canada, some unobtrusive person had presented me, not only with a copy of one of the Gospels, neatly bound in blue, but with a beautiful brotherly smile of welcome. Gifts should not be given away; and though I would not, if I could, have parted with the smile, it has to be confessed that, on entering the hall and meeting George Tims, I presented him with my Gospel.

'All right,' he brightly remarked in accepting the offering. 'Then you must have mine'; and, taking an identical volume from his pocket, he handed it to me. 'And now,' added the charming boy, 'please write my name in the one you have given me and your name in the one I have given you.'

Having taken out my fountain-pen and

done as directed, I was equally surprised and pleased to confront my dear twins, each exhibiting a copy of the Gospel for his name to be written therein. On looking up, at the conclusion of this supplementary task, I found four other boys also holding out their similar booklets; and soon the air rang with 'Me next, please, sir,' and open Gospel pages quivered all round me like the wings of an encircling cloud of doves. Obviously all our little people had shared in a pretty welcome to Canada.

Half an hour later, the ink in my pen fortunately holding out, I was doggedly pushing on with a task that seemed interminable, when Mr. Owen called us all to attention; and soon our party had marched from the hall and were pouring into C.P.R. cars that stood waiting some hundred yards away.

Our boys were not a little excited to find themselves in a train that was so like a house, or, rather, a series of houses, all connected by a central gangway; each having seats for seventy-two persons, and being more like a mission-hall than a carriage on an English railway. Every boy soon found

himself seated next to another boy, and with two other boys sitting just in front of him; nor was it long before the street of houses was on the move, and many young eyes, peering eagerly out of window, saw in the twilight a moving panorama of trees and buildings and fallen snow.

But the train and the landscape did not monopolize the thoughts of our young travellers. It was past tea-time, and they wondered whether, and if so when, they were going to get something to eat. How Mr. Owen proposed to feed three hundred hearty children, in addition to several adults, on an unbroken railway journey of some thirty hours, also set me thinking.

Instinctively I found myself considering in what wise I should set about the task, had it been allotted to me. My appalled imagination pictured the initial difficulty of providing over three hundred plates, over three hundred knives and over three hundred forks, not to mention saltspoons. Then my mind became fascinated by the problem, Where could a cloth, or cloths, be laid for so many feasters? This led to the still more baffling questions, How was food to

be stored and prepared in sufficient quantity, and who was there to serve it?

Nor had I arrived at a satisfactory conclusion on a single point when the door opened at the end of the car, and a man appeared who was shoving a large upright barrel that was obviously heavy. Having advanced a few feet, the man paused and handed each of the four boys to the right, and each of the four boys to the left, a chunk of something taken from the barrel. Then he pushed on another few feet, and repeated the operation; so making his way, by laborious stages, along the corridor.

Soon I had a near view of what the barrel was yielding. Each boy could be seen clutching and devouring a sandwich, and a sandwich of noble proportions. Conceive a baker's roll the size of a small loaf, and picture it cut in twain, with the two halves held apart by a thick intervening slab of meat. As for knives, forks, plates and tablecloths—pshaw! the organizers of this picnic had been too wise to complicate the situation by introducing any such finicking accessories. They had concentrated their efforts on providing the essential—food, and food of a

wholesome, acceptable and nourishing character, adequate in bulk, and in a form easy of manipulation. As for a beverage, there was, as the boys had already discovered, a copious supply of iced water (with a drinking cup placed in close proximity to the tap) at either end of each car.

Presently another man arrived pushing another barrel. It was oranges this time. And soon the boys were looking all the jollier for their substantial meal.

Curious to learn whence the viands came, I explored the train and discovered that, between the three cars occupied by the boys and the two cars occupied by the girls, there was a car in use for executive purposes. One section proved to be our pantry: the Allan Line having drawn upon the *Corinthian's* stores to provision the Barnardo party on their railway journey, besides contributing three of the ship's stewards to prepare and serve the meals of our young travellers.

In another section of the executive car I found Mr. Owen at work amid piles of documents, his mind still intent on the important work of judiciously allocating the

boys among farmers who had applied for them. On my asking him how he was getting on, his reply reflected a regret to which he had often previously given expression—

‘I’ve nearly finished,’ he said, ‘placing the 200 boys. That is easy enough. But I have not supplied the needs of 15,000 farmers who sent in applications. That, alas, is impossible. And to think that over in the Old Country there are fifteen times 15,000 boys who are now facing blank futures, and who would be permanently benefited if only we could bring them out here and place them with those farmers.’

At this point, Mrs. Lloyd arrived to ask me whether, if not otherwise engaged, I would visit the girls’ cars and contribute the mild muscular effort necessary for converting seats into beds. For the practice of placing double pews face to face lends itself to this interesting development: by shuffling the hinged woodwork into an alternative position, and adjusting a supporting arm, you can completely bridge the space previously available for knees, and thereby form a couch of ample width and length to accommodate two recumbent adults.

Having assisted to effect these transformations in the girls' cars, I returned to the boys, who, when once they had grasped the mechanical principles involved, proved ready and eager to make their own beds. A supplementary couch of corresponding dimensions is obtainable by pulling down a hinged panel recessed overhead; but, because some little boys are restless sleepers, and a fall of five feet is apt to be serious, Mr. Owen gave orders that the upper bunks were not to be used.

Certainly the lower bunks answered all requirements. No boy will need to be told that when you are on a great adventure things don't happen in the same humdrum way that they do in ordinary life. Having tea, as we have seen, had been a picnic; and salt-cellars and table manners would have spoilt everything. Going to bed proved to be camping out; and it was not at all an occasion for sheets, pillows, being tucked in, or anything like that.

Boots were taken off, and folded overcoats came in handy as something soft for little heads to rest on. Soon all the lads were lying down in that strange house of

polished rosewood which quivered and grunted as it went plunging through the night. After we adults had had our evening meal, I found, on revisiting the boys, that the gas jets had been turned down in their cars, which were wrapped in quietude. I went tip-toeing along the corridor, just to make sure that all my friends were comfortable. The light sufficed to reveal the quaint postures of all those intermingled little sleepers. Many faces were visible—faces of happiness, peace and health. By a chain of association reaching back two-and-forty years, they set me thinking of those other child faces which, when Barnardo saw them on the roof of an East End outhouse, spurred him to the work that engrossed his life and had survived his death. How marvellously connected were those seven pale faces and these two hundred pink ones.

Here and there I found a little fellow sitting up, or supporting himself on an elbow, with his forehead pressed against the window.

'Well, what are you doing, my little man?' I whispered to the first whom I found so situated.

Turning to me with wide-open, dreamy eyes, he whispered back: 'Looking at

Canada, sir'; and I realized that through the window he could dimly discern a moonlit wonderland partly enveloped with snow.

'Better go to sleep now,' I coaxingly advised, 'and you will feel all the fresher to look at Canada to-morrow.'

Back went the little head to the recumbent position it must earlier have occupied—sleepy children being the most docile of beings. And what beautiful smiles they give you as they slowly shut their eyes. For children are first cousins to the angels, revealing their kinship never more convincingly than when hovering on the borders of dreamland.

Throughout the night, Mr. Owen remained awake and alert, still with plenty of work to engage his brain and pen. Having allocated the two hundred boys to a great number of townships in the far-stretching territory of Old Ontario, he had to study time-tables, and work his way through a complexity of train routes, before being in a position to draw up a list of the railway tickets needed. Mrs. Lloyd, if she slept at all, slept with one eye open. Mr. Loftin and his colleague agreed to exchange watches, one snatching

a little rest while the other stood sentinel over the sleeping boys. It was courteously pointed out that there was no occasion for me to remain awake. I did, indeed, pull down an upper bunk, and spend an occasional hour in that eyry. But to guard our precious freight was a privilege in which the superfluous author wanted to feel he was sharing. So at intervals I trod the corridor that passed through the chambers of sleep, and thus I can testify to little opportunities of service that fell to the appointed watchmen. The slight, lithe bodies often prove wrigglesome, to the inconvenience of bedmates. A little sleeper may be disturbed by a twitching foot in contact with his face. Occasionally a pair of stockinged legs, having slipped off the couch, will stretch out in danger of hurt, should a trainman go hurrying along the corridor with incautious footsteps. I found one small wandering somnambulist. Another little fellow was sitting up, wishful for a drink of water.

From my eyry it chanced that I could overlook the recumbent forms of several family groups who, throughout the voyage, had occupied third-class cabins in close

proximity to Mr. Owen's office, and who, indeed, were emigrating under his guardianship. One prematurely-aged couple—illiterate, with faces that had the pinched, grey look—had consorted all their days with Poverty in London slums unvisited by sunshine. Other humble folk, bent by worry, rheumatism and privation, had come from provincial England. A gaunt middle-aged woman and several dishevelled children were of this miscellaneous company, which has its counterpart, I learnt, in every one of Mr. Owen's parties.

Those clusters of emigrants occur a little outside the direct intention of the Barnardo work. They are a by-product of Private Imperialism.

A number of Barnardo boys, when they go to Canada, leave behind them, in dire destitution, sometimes both parents, more frequently a widowed mother. The boys pass through the stage of boarding-out to a three-years' apprenticeship, from which they emerge as substantial wage-earners, soon perhaps to be farmers on their own account. In their early teens the majority have growing bank balances; often in the

opening years of manhood they have a house of their own. Frequently it happens that they send for the old folk to come and share their Canadian prosperity. Many an aged widow in an English slum, hopelessly struggling to keep her tired old bones out of the workhouse, has received the wonderful letter telling that her passage is paid, and everything arranged, and all by the son who lives in her mind as a beloved little boy in a crimson-braided uniform.

Then there are those constantly recurring cases—charged with infinite pathos—where the Barnardo boy re-crosses the sea as a young man and re-visits Stepney Causeway, bent on rending the veil that screens his past, because of a yearning to find his mother, if haply she be still alive. Often the long search, starting from time-worn and unpromising clues, leads only to a pauper's grave; but sometimes the son finds his unknown parent and bears her triumphantly across the ocean.

The men and women in our party proved to have but one pivot for their thoughts—the wonderful boys who had sent for them and to whom they were speeding. It was

'My son does' this, 'My son says' that, 'My son thinks' the other. Gratitude and gratification make a beautiful combination in the human character. On the ship those old folk talked like blessed mortals who found the world transformed by the touch of a fairy's wand. On the train, from my eyry, I saw them smiling in their dreams.

At the break of day, certain of our little adventurers were peering out of windows. And soon their shouts—ringing with excitement and exultation—banished sleep in those travelling dormitories.

'Look! Look! There's a sleigh!'

For early-rising is practised by farmers on the North American Continent; and dawn found many of them driving to the woods, intent on securing timber fuel for next winter's needs. But the matter of interest to the boys was the method of locomotion adopted by those farmers.

Snow in England is so fleeting that English ideas remain in one respect curiously circumscribed. It is almost as difficult for us to conceive of a cart moving without wheels as of a bird flying without wings. To the British imagination the sleigh is something

foreign, romantic and strange, conjuring up thoughts of the North Pole and of hungry packs of pursuing wolves. As a matter of fact, when snow is on the ground, a vehicle gets along best if, instead of wheels, it is supported on runners shod with iron, like the keel of a boat. This is recognized in Canada and parts of the United States, where in winter all vehicles, except trains, trams and motor-cars, are superseded by sleighs of corresponding capacity. The trolley going along the road laden with stone is a sleigh. So is the perambulator in which baby is taken for an airing. If you go for a ride in a cab, you go for a ride in a sleigh.

But, as I have said, English eyes open wide when first they see horses drawing wagons or carriages that move on runners instead of wheels. Our boys were still gloating over the sleighs, and pointing them out to one another, when breakfast time arrived and once more stewards came along the corridor pushing heavy barrels.

Interest was later excited by other features of the novel landscape, the juvenile enthusiasm culminating when, on the train slowly

crossing the St. Lawrence, the beauty and majesty of that river were revealed.

'It's a lot bigger than the Thames, isn't it?' exclaimed enthusiastic Smithers. He and I were seated opposite one another, and it chanced that the adjoining seats were vacant. His face was aglow with health and a deep content. Only two months had elapsed since I saw him, as a subdued and unhappy lad, rendering an account of himself to the Barnardo inspector. At the time, it may be remembered, I noted that he was tolerably well fleshed and set up. But then I did not know what had since been revealed, namely, that he was naturally of a broad and thick build. During the two months that had since elapsed, his chest had developed and his cheeks filled out, to an extent that suggested two years' growth.

'You are looking remarkably well, Smithers,' I was moved to remark.

'That's just how I feel!' was his jubilant rejoinder. 'Hooray! I'm in Canada at last. Yesterday didn't count, as we hardly saw anything. But it begins properly to-day, and it couldn't have come at a better time, could it, sir? For to-day is my birthday!'

Whereupon, on behalf of Mr. William Baker, I shook him warmly by the hand and wished him many happy returns of the day. Then, by way of adding a formal touch to this most auspicious celebration of the anniversary, I presented him with the first specimens of Canadian coinage that had touched his palms.

The train sped on towards Ontario; and, as I looked out at the white landscape, my private thoughts travelled back to the unspeakable hut from which Smithers had been rescued. His mind must have moved in the same direction; for the silence was broken by these faltering words—

‘My father, sir—I wonder how he is.’

On looking at Smithers, I found his face transformed and averted, and his eyes overflowing.

Fortunately it was possible to assure him that his father no longer lacked friends who were able and anxious to help him; and soon the emotional crisis was over and its traces obliterated.

We were presently travelling into the Province in which the Barnardo children are boarded-out and apprenticed; and, with

regard to older boys allocated to eastern townships traversed by the C.P.R., Mr. Owen had telegraphed on ahead to the applicant farmers, bidding them meet our train and receive their charges. Thus it happened that a group of lads were assembled apart from the others, with caps on, and holding their overcoats and other portable property. After receiving Mr. Owen's parting words and instructions, coupled with hearty good wishes, they alighted one by one at succeeding stations. Sometimes the train lingered long enough to give us a view of the lad, first standing alone, and no doubt with a full heart, on the unfamiliar station, then being greeted in hearty Canadian fashion by those who had come to meet him; and we knew he would soon be sitting beside a warm stove, the hero of the evening in a family of homely folk who would make him cordially welcome.

After tea our young people removed their boots and soon were once more lying in slumbering quartettes, the twins with their arms about each other's necks; and again I gave myself the pleasure of sharing in the guardianship of our precious Imperial freight.

Peterborough was reached at midnight, and at Peterborough our Barkingside contingent alighted and were received by Miss J. G. Kennedy and Miss Wilson, secretary and matron of the Margaret Cox Home, which—the Canadian headquarters of the girls' branch of the Barnardo work—is situated on the outskirts of that town.

Leaving a hundred large boxes stacked at Peterborough station, the train sped on, our boys still in dreamland. Nor did Mr. Owen summon them from that realm till an hour and a half later, when the end of our long journey was approaching.

It was 2 a.m. when, standing beneath a lamp outside the Union Railway Station at Toronto, I watched the departure of several wagons stuffed full of boys. They were going to the spacious Barnardo Home in Peter Street, about a mile away. I was proposing to allow myself a luxurious long sleep in a neighbouring hotel, whither I carried a mental picture of many little hands waving farewells, to an accompanying cordial chorus of 'Good-night, sir.'

CHAPTER XI

SMITHERS ON AN ONTARIO FARM

CALLING some ten hours later at Peter Street, I beheld my young fellow voyagers under an aspect that was new but familiar. They were disporting themselves in a roomy playground, and—except that crimson-braided uniforms were absent—it was Leopold House all over again.

This lapse into institutional life was not, I found, quite to the liking of my little friends. It spoilt the sense of being in Canada. It came as a prosaic interruption to a glorious progressive adventure.

'I say, sir,' Smithers hurried up with furrowed brow to inquire, 'how long shall we be kept here? There's several boys gone off this morning. When am *I* going?'

To try and find out, I went into the main building and entered the offices, which proved to be congested and athrill with Barnardo

officials apparently overwhelmed with business. Had our party arrived on the expected date it would have found the staff engaged only with the ordinary daily correspondence, interviews, telephoning and other activities which are necessitated by guardianship of many thousands of young people. The coal-strike and the westerly gales had unfortunately put forward the arrival of our party to the first week in April—a period of special pressure at Peter Street. For the 1st of April happens to be the day from which most of the boys' indentured engagements date, and consequently the day on which, every year, many of those engagements expire. In other words, on the 1st of April hundreds of the Barnardo lads—each a Douglas or a Smithers who arrived in Canada several years before—find themselves, on reaching the age of seventeen or eighteen, at the end of their apprenticeship, with a substantial sum in the bank and free to go West, to hire themselves at good wages on an Ontario farm, or to take such other first step towards prosperity as they themselves may prefer and their guardians approve.

Under the apprenticeship contract, the

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farmer, besides providing for the boy's current needs, transmits to Peter Street about £20, which Mr. Owen, in the capacity of trustee, banks on the boy's behalf; and I may mention, by way of illustrating the working of this system, that the Toronto Branch of the Bank of Commerce keeps a separate set of ledgers for the Barnardo boys' balances, which, at the time of my visit, amounted to £26,000. That, when you come to think of it, is quite a considerable slice of wealth for a thousand or so young lads to have saved, and saved out of money they earned during the process of learning a business that qualifies them, without any waiting or difficulty, to secure constant wages ranging from 10s. to £1 10s. a week, plus board and lodging.

But the point at which I am aiming is that, on reaching the age of seventeen or eighteen, the boy frequently desires to handle a portion of the money he has earned during the apprenticeship period; and this exposes the Barnardo authorities, during the first week of April, to a special wave of detailed business. As guardians they are under a legal obligation to 'safeguard the earnings' of their wards;

and thus the petition of each boy has to be considered on its merits. The working of a wise discretion may be illustrated by these facts: no objection is taken to the application of money to bring out widowed mothers and to pay railway fares to the West; but Mr. Owen usually vetoes expenditure on firearms, bicycles and town lots. Speaking generally, the boy finds himself in a position to handle a quarter of his savings.

So it came about that, on entering the offices, I found the staff involved in a snow-storm of vouchers, receipts, post office orders, cheques, dollar bills, express orders, bank-books and statements of expenditure; while a part of its attention was, of necessity, engaged by the avalanche of boys that had just arrived.

From a memorandum of recent arrangements I learnt that Smithers and George Tims had been allocated to neighbouring farms situated near Centralia and Crediton, in Huron County; nor could I doubt that, in placing those two boys in one district, Mr. Owen had had a kindly thought for my convenience. Indeed, on my meeting him hurrying through his hive of industry, he

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admitted as much, and added that, if so minded, I could convoy the two boys to their destination on the following day—a proposal that won my ready assent. Accordingly, lingering only to copy the prospective addresses of many of my other little friends, I returned to the playground and informed Smithers that his patience would not be taxed beyond noontime on the morrow.

That the intervening twenty-four hours dragged somewhat slowly for the impatient boy, I gathered when, on returning next day to Peter Street, I found my charges waiting in the hall, with their hats, satchels and overcoats on.

'I thought you were never coming, sir,' said Smithers, as the anxious creases left his brow.

'I told him,' was the complacent comment of smiling Georgie, 'you'd be *sure* to come, because you said you would.'

It seemed that each boy carried in his pocket an open envelope containing his railway ticket, his baggage check, and the address of his boarding-out home. So—after the two lads had received parting words of counsel, and friendly pats on the back,

from Barnardo officials—nothing remained but for us to clamber into the vehicle waiting at the door and betake us to the Union Station.

Our five hours' journey of 123 miles over the Grand Trunk Railway took us through a fine stretch of Western Ontario, stopping places including Guelph (with its world-renowned Agricultural College), Berlin (mainly populated by many thousands of our German fellow subjects, and soon to receive King George's congratulations on its civic incorporation), and the fine city of Stratford (situated on the River Avon, near the village of Shakespeare, and having its Romeo ward, its Hamlet ward and its other municipal areas named after characters in the plays). But matters of this kind, I am afraid, made a less direct personal appeal to my travelling companions than the fact that, thanks to the forethought of Peter Street, their satchels contained some appetizing sandwiches; while an unofficial supply of fruit and milk chocolate also assisted to beguile the tedium of the railway journey. During its later phases Georgie dozed, with his pale face nestling against my shoulder; for that delicately-

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constituted boy, who was so sea-sick on the Atlantic, had been train-sick on the C.P.R., and now, on the Grand Trunk, was suffering from a mild visitation of the latter disorder, his condition exciting much more sympathy from onlooking ladies than from Smithers.

'I hope,' said the little fellow, when at last I had to rouse him, 'mother will let me go to bed as soon as I get in.' It was characteristic of a boy who had been boarded out in England that he should have that pretty name for the unknown woman who was somewhere awaiting him.

'H'm! I hope I'll get some supper first!' soliloquized robust Smithers.

A few minutes later we had alighted at Centralia, and been heartily greeted by two pleasant-faced, middle-aged Canadian farmers—Mr. Ebenezer Taylor (who was eagerly awaiting a boy named George Tims) and Mr. Peter Malcolm (obviously keen to learn what manner of boy a certain Roland Smithers might prove to be).

With their first impressions I was destined to become unintentionally acquainted; for soon the two farmers, with a view to secure the boys' boxes, arrived on one side of the

luggage stack without noticing that, bent on the same errand, I was standing on the other side; and thus it was impossible not to overhear what they said.

'Mine looks husky,' was the complacent remark Mr. Peter Malcolm addressed confidentially to Mr. Ebenezer Taylor.

'Mine looks awful small,' was the dubious remark Mr. Ebenezer Taylor addressed confidentially to Mr. Peter Malcolm.

('Yes,' was my private mental comment, 'small and good. You wait, Ebenezer, and you'll see what a treasure you have received. I only wish I felt more certain that you are worthy of your good fortune.' But I made no audible comment.)

Each farmer had come in his cutter (only to be distinguished from a dog-cart by the absence of wheels); and Mr. Peter Malcolm insisted that I must accompany him home to supper. So in a few minutes, with Smithers on our knees, and with Smithers' box lashed on the back of the vehicle, we were gliding rapidly along the road, the mare obviously revelling in her mild exercise on the newly-fallen and melting snow.

It was a clear, still evening, the air deli-

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ciously invigorating and by no means cold. A great, full-blooded Canadian sunset supplied the white landscape with a background of crimson splendour.

Having crossed a frozen rivulet, we entered a coppice of trees and shadows, pushing our way through a snowdrift two feet deep.

'This is something like, isn't it, sir?' exclaimed exuberant Smithers.

Unfortunately our drive did not last nearly long enough. Soon we had stopped before a plain-looking timber house, wherein we had a cordial welcome from the farmer's wife—a kind-faced woman who immediately divided her attention between rocking a cradle, controlling two little boys but recently emerged from babyhood, asking Smithers many questions about himself, bidding me take a chair by the stove and excuse everything being so rough, and telling both of us she was sure we must be hungry and that supper was ready.

The apartment was, as we should say, the kitchen—doubtless, however, it was the living room of the family. For life on a Canadian farm is ever characterized by a homely simplicity, and by domestic appointments wh

seem, to English middle-class eyes, somewhat rough and ready. It does not matter how many thousand dollars the farmer may be worth, the floor of his living-room will probably be covered with irregular patches of oilcloth, and his table cutlery be of the steel and bone-handle variety.

But when Mr. Malcolm came in, and we all sat down to supper, I found the food (as has been my uniform experience in the households of Canadian farmers) excellent in quality and served in unstinted quantities. There was a large dish of boiled new-laid eggs; a still larger dish of home-grown bacon, which proved to be tender and mild; a tureen of mashed potatoes; generous supplies of butter and bread, both excellent and home-made; a large bowl of cream; a jug of maple syrup; and a number of our hostess's sultana scones; with the great pot of tea that accompanies every meal in Canada.

Mrs. Malcolm ascertained our preferences and supplied our needs, and Mr. Malcolm asked a blessing, and added (in strict conformity with national usage)—

'Now help yourselves to anything you want. It's all plain and rough, but you're

heartily welcome to what we've got. So do, please, make yourselves at home.'

The endeavours of Smithers to comply with these hospitable injunctions were noted and commended.

'Roland eats hearty,' Mr. Malcolm remarked to his wife, as the meal proceeded. Now, I'm glad of that. He's a big boy for twelve, and if he enjoys his meals, he'll grow up a fine, strong feller—see if he don't'; and, as though impatient to have his prophecy confirmed, the enthusiastic farmer pushed the bowl of cream towards Smithers, who said, 'Thank you, sir,' and took some.

Smithers comported himself with solemn composure. He was absolutely at home; and I had never before seen the boy so self-satisfied. Indeed, some of the remarks he addressed to the farmer and his wife seemed to me—but obviously not to them—almost patronizing.

'I want to help in everything I can,' he explained.

'All you've got to do,' he was presently assuring the farmer, 'is to tell me what to do, and I'll do it.'

In fact, if Smithers had left his native

land, and come hurrying across the Atlantic, with a single eye to befriending that family, and assisting them through their daily difficulties, he could not have addressed them in a more reassuring manner.

‘Well, my boy,’ replied Mr. Malcolm, ‘you’ll have your schooling to take up your time for quite a while yet, and it’s not a great deal of work we’d expect from one your age, any way. That wouldn’t be reasonable. Not but what you’ll be able sometimes to mind the children, and so leave my wife free to get out a bit—besides being useful in other little ways, I don’t doubt.’

‘What I’d like best,’ Smithers made haste to inform him, ‘would be to look after the horses and help with the farm work.’

‘Aye, aye, that’ll come in time—all in good time,’ murmured Mr. Malcolm, as he eyed his acquisition with growing interest and favour.

Meanwhile the table had been cleared and Mrs. Malcolm set about washing the plates.

‘I can wipe,’ said Smithers, moving to her assistance; whereupon the smiling lady armed him with a dishcloth and they did the job together.

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Afterwards she busied herself in passing a cleansing rag over the eggs her husband brought in from the nests. Once more Smithers volunteered his services, and she surrendered the task to him. True, the smooth current of affairs was momentarily interrupted when one of the eggs got broken ; but his self-possession returned when Mrs. Malcolm made haste to excuse the occurrence, the industrious lad readily taking the view that it was not so much his fault as the egg's.

A little later, Smithers, who was quite the lion of the evening, unlocked his box and discovered its varied useful contents before an admiring and—so far as the two Malcolm children were concerned—somewhat inquisitive audience.

Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm insisted that I must stay the night ; and thus next morning I had the pleasure of seeing Smithers alternately rocking the cradle, playing with the children, and helping to lay the table. In fact, he had promptly settled into his place as a member of the family—which is the capacity, as I was to learn, that all the Barnardo children are invited to fill in democratic Canada.

After breakfast, I walked to the distant

brick house that was pointed out as the home of Mr. Ebenezer Taylor. There on the threshold I was greeted by a smiling and radiant Georgie, who introduced me to his new 'mother' and her cluster of young children. Here was another pleasant family of homely folk.

Conspicuous on the wall was a blackboard, with its tray for chalk; and Mrs. Taylor explained at some length that, while her husband was no scholar, she herself reached the Fourth Book at school, thereby acquiring a taste for reading which impelled and qualified her to assist the children with their lessons.

The several words written on the blackboard were, I was delighted to learn, the work of Georgie; and having bidden the little fellow run down to the cellar and fetch some potatoes (he had apparently already mastered the ins and outs of the establishment), she told me that his spelling and writing were wonderfully good for his age. Nay, she made a special point of the fact that Georgie was obviously more advanced, and a sharper and better boy in every way, than Herb had been when he arrived. This brought out the interesting fact that in Herbert Graham

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the family included another Barnardo boy, though one who, having just completed his three-years' apprenticeship on the farm, was about to leave and go to the West.

The voluble lady proceeded to enlarge on her principles for the upbringing of children—principles which seemed to me, while admirable in the abstract, rather too fixed and formal for a world in which no two human beings are alike; but as her own little ones were proving at the moment somewhat out of hand, and as her methods of pacification alternated between gifts of sugar and threats of corporal punishment, I concluded that, if her theory was moulded by intellect, her practice was ruled by impulse. In brief, while there was every evidence that Mrs. Taylor was a thoroughly well-meaning woman, I should have been better pleased, for Georgie's sake, if she had approached the problem of child-raising in a more humble spirit, and had shown herself cognizant of the crucial truth that love is more potent than 'lickings' (to quote the form of correction, administered with a strap, indicated as the ultimate consequence of persistent disobedience).

'Come and see our gobblers,' said joyous Georgie, who, after bringing potatoes from the cellar, had fetched an armful of wood from a shed; and, under his escort, I was soon passing along the pathway of boards that stretched across the garden, where turkeys and fowls were promenading in the snow and slush.

Over against the great barn we found Mr. Taylor, in the final throes of unloading tree trunks from his bob-sleigh—a task in which he was ably assisted by a sturdy, brown-faced lad who was introduced to me as Herb.

'Going to the bush again, dad?' sang out the little boy who, arriving overnight, was already completely at home.

'Yes,' replied the farmer, 'we must get one more load. Are you coming again, George?'

'We'll both come,' my little friend took upon himself to declare. 'You *will*, won't you?' he looked up to urge, in his most coaxing manner; and I was nothing loth for the adventure.

With Mr. Taylor and Herb seated on the front segment of the strange vehicle, Georgie and I sat on the back segment. 'Hold on

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tight!' shouted the farmer, as he lashed his two powerful horses into action; and soon we were careering through pools of water and over snow, rock and bare earth, plunging down into ditches, floundering up hillocks and, in fact, making a bee-line across the landscape in true, uncompromising Canadian fashion. Our destination proved to be a wood where the ground was encumbered by much felled timber; and the bob-sleigh was brought to a standstill alongside so large a log that I wondered how, even if George and I lent a hand, our two expert companions could succeed in raising it. Nor was the enigma solved on the horses being unhitched and backed against the opposite side of the vehicle. But all was made clear when, the animals having been connected by chains with the ponderous object, they advanced a few paces and thereby drew it up an incline of poles until it lay on the sleigh. The operation was several times repeated, until Mr. Taylor and his assistant had secured a full load; my interest in their proceedings not preventing the discovery that, where the snow had melted, the grasses, wild strawberry plants and other forms of vegetation

had reached an advanced stage of vivid green development under the white mantle that had enveloped them.

Seated on the cluster of chained logs, we went jolting back to the barn; and later in the morning Mr. Taylor drove me into the thriving village of Crediton, situated less than two miles away. There I found lodgings, and there, during the following fortnight, I entered upon the task of writing this book. And since a sedentary occupation must not be persisted in during an unbroken sequence of working hours, I had ample opportunity, during the short walks I took abroad, to watch two deeply interesting phenomena, namely, the opening of the Canadian spring and the opening of the Canadian careers of two Barnardo boys.

Every day the sun shone brightly, the sky was blue, the air felt warm, and developments happened in the landscape with a rapidity—one might almost say, an abruptness—that suggested the transformation scene in a pantomime. On the first day, the snow on the road was up to my ankles, but a number of red-breasted thrushes, perched on the fences, were singing lustily about the good

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times coming. On the second day, I found parts of the road merely muddy, and, where areas of pasture had appeared, the grass was seen to be of a pale, and almost yellow, colour. On the third day, the road was free from snow and, by picking your way, you could avoid the miry places; while the yellow grass had become green. By the end of the week, the road was dust-dry, buds on trees and lilac bushes were unfolding, and violets were in bloom in the Crediton gardens.

It was two days later that a number of honey-bees flew in at the open window against which I sat writing; and, concluding that those creatures would not be about unless there was something for them to gather, I was presently seeking sources of nectar in and around the village. Nor did I go far before finding maple trees in bloom, with their haze of obscure little crimson flowers all a-hum with buzzing bees.

Meanwhile, I had come in contact with another sort of bee altogether, namely, the wood-bee, which is not an insect, but an institution.

We have noted Mr. Taylor gathering about

his barn the tree-trunks which, it appeared, he had felled at his leisure during the winter ; and I learnt that his neighbours had been similarly engaged in 'drawing logs from the bush'—it being the task appropriate to be done at that season of the year. But there remained the obligation to saw the logs into sections, to split those sections into pieces of a size handy for use in the stove, and to pile the pieces in a wood-shed, where the sap would dry, rendering them available as fuel for the following winter.

All that cutting and chopping would involve a farmer in several days of lonely toil ; and so a friendly group of neighbours visit each other's premises, armed with saws and axes, on different afternoons, when the whole, or the bulk, of the work is done by combined effort in a few hours—the occasion being dubbed a 'wood-bee,' for which the farmer's wife prepares by making a quantity of her best cakes and pies. For custom ordains that the toilers shall be refreshed and rewarded by a substantial and merry feast.

And thus it came about that, on the first occasion of my re-visiting the farms of Mr. Malcolm and Mr. Taylor, both those gentle-

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men were absent with their axes; and for information about the behaviour of the boys, I had to depend upon the testimony of their foster-mothers and of my own eyes.

Smithers was full of the fact that, since leaving England, he had gained 10 lb. in weight. For it seemed that the conscientious farmer had put him on the scales (no doubt to have a standard by which to measure future development); and the lad had been subjected to the same test two days before we sailed.

'Do you find the air gives you a good appetite?' I privily asked him.

'Yes, doesn't it just!' he enthusiastically replied. 'It's wonderfully good food, too—and they let me eat as much as I can!'

Smiling Mrs. Malcolm gave Smithers a good character.

'Boy-like,' she explained, 'he's best pleased to be round at the barn with my husband; but when I ask him to rock the cradle, or look after the children for a spell, he don't grumble or make any kick, though I can see he'd a lot sooner be out among the stock. Oh, yes—I fancy Roland and us are going to get along fine.'

It seemed he was keenly interested in the one farmyard operation that took place in the parlour, namely, the hatching of chickens in an incubator. I learnt that Smithers' eyes were constantly pressed against the glass panel, watching for results.

This proved to be a point of agreement in the experiences of the two boys. For—on my calling at the Taylors'—Georgie, whom I found busily throwing wood into the shed, at once took me to the sitting-room and showed me the incubator, in which could be discerned several early arrivals floundering among their broken shells.

On my departure, Georgie had Mrs. Taylor's permission to accompany me to the road—her own three children insisting upon coming, too. The little fellow's radiant looks spoke for themselves; but on my asking him if he were quite happy, he replied: 'Yes, I like being at the farm. Only I wish you lived here, too. I don't know what I shall do,' added the affectionate little fellow, 'when you go away.' And the wistful note in his tone set a chord of sadness vibrating in my own breast. It was going to be very hard for me to part from Georgie—so hard, indeed,

that I had been sorely tempted by the alternative. But adoption had to be dismissed as a purely selfish desire, promising no advantage, but rather an ultimate disadvantage, to the person chiefly concerned.

Georgie in my English home would be but one more middle-class lad confronting the Old Land's ever-narrowing opportunities and ever-growing competition. Nay, had I not, in my own circle, been bidding youth carry its energy and ambitions across blue water to the developing regions of our Empire? And how better could I discharge my obligations to a son, or an adopted son, than by planting his feet on the ladder of Canadian prosperity? Which was something that had already been done for Georgie. So the notion of adopting him merely caused my thoughts to follow an unprofitable circle. I could see myself planting him, later on, in the very situation from which I had plucked him. For it is the simple fact that the agricultural opportunities of the Dominion—which are the most important opportunities of the Dominion—can in no surer way be opened up to a man than by placing him, while he is yet a boy, in just such an Ontario.

farm household as those in which Georgie and Smithers had been placed. So that, for Georgie, the chief consequence of my interference would be the loss of several years of early initiation into Canadian methods and customs—in other words, the postponing of his professional proficiency ; against which disadvantage I should be able to point merely to some benefit for the lad in the direction of mental culture.

Yet these reflections, carried one stage further, brought me personal consolation. Having decided that, were Georgie my adopted son, I would wish him where he actually was, I fell to considering in what ways the assumed relationship would continue to manifest itself, supposing he had been placed by my initiative on an Ontario farm. The answer was obvious—by personal visits (whenever I found myself in Eastern Canada) ; by an exchange of letters ; and by the sending of tokens of remembrance at Christmas and on Georgie's birthday. Well—the happy thought had come to me—those links could be forged without recourse to any formal adoption. Nay, what was there to prevent me keeping similarly in touch with other

of the little fellows to whom, on the ship, I had become personally attached ?

And thus by roundabout reasoning was I brought to a conclusion that others have reached by mental methods more direct. For it became known to me that many other persons, by various chances, have from time to time come in contact with companies of Barnardo children, with the almost inevitable result that a personal affection has been awakened towards certain of the little lads and maids ; and this has not infrequently led to an exchange of letters in which the grown-up has derived pleasure by conferring it. Then, too, there is the expanding circle of well-to-do folk who, having sent £10 to Stepney Causeway for the emigration of a selected boy or girl, have subsequently kept in touch with the child they have benefited, following with a personal interest the development of his or her fortunes in Canada.

And now—having made my little personal confession—let me resume the thread of the two boys' early experiences in Huron County. On my third visit to the farms, I failed to see either of them, because they were both at school ; Mrs. Taylor proving to be indig-

nant over the fact that Georgie, in her opinion, was not receiving just treatment from the teacher. The allegation was that, after testing him in monetary arithmetic, that young lady had formed so low an estimate of his proficiency that she had 'put him in the Second Book' (an ascending scale of 'Readers,' in Ontario, corresponding to our school 'Standards').

'That's just baby's work to George,' Mrs. Taylor declared. 'Why, he could easy take the Third Book. I've tried him myself, and even the big words don't bother him any.'

It certainly looked as though my little friend's mental powers had not been gauged with much discrimination. Steeped in the £ s. d. currency, he would naturally be all at sea over Canadian dollars and cents. However, I decided that the little scholastic setback would be only of a temporary character, and that Georgie could be trusted to find his own level—an opinion in which I was strengthened when, on walking towards the schoolhouse (which was situated within ten minutes' walk of the farm), I met the two boys careering homeward along the road. their high-spirited English antics being

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watched with admiring interest by an attendant cluster of Canadian schoolmates.

My next visit to the farms occurred on a Saturday, when the school does not meet.

Smithers proved to be taking mild exercise in a swing suspended from the branch of an apple-tree; the two little Malcolm boys playing with a toy wagon several yards away.

'The boss is out,' said Smithers. 'So is Mrs. Malcolm and the baby. They've left me to mind the place and look after the children.'

George proved to be more strenuously engaged. I found him in his shirt-sleeves sweeping out the stable—and making a very clean job of it, too.

'Ebenezer's gone to a wood-bee,' he explained, as he continued industriously to ply his broom.

'Surely,' I mildly demurred, 'you ought to call him "Mr. Taylor?"'

'Oh, everybody calls him "Ebenezer." When I asked him, he said I could. But you just wait a minute, and I'll show you how I groom the horses.'

And, being done with his sweeping, he approached a great mare standing in her stall.

'Get up! Get up! Whoa, Molly!' he said, addressing the mare; then, turning and addressing me, he explained: 'I have to say something, to let her know I'm coming; or she might be frightened and kick.'

Then he stood on his box and proceeded to scrape the animal's hairy hide with a curry comb.

'I cleaned two of them down this morning,' he gaily related. 'Molly never gives me any trouble. But one of the others is awful restless. That's Rover, and you bet I don't like doing Rover. He's much too dandy.'

For the nimble-witted little fellow was already 'talking Canadian.'

'You've got one word wrong, Georgie,' I pointed out. 'Rover isn't "dandy."''

'Oh, no, of course not,'—he hastened apologetically to correct himself—'I mean, he's crazy.'

Nor did this exhaust the clues I gained, on that visit, to the new dexterities which, in less than a fortnight, Georgie had acquired.

When the milking hour arrived he proceeded to another section of the stable, bent on unhitching the ten cows and driving them into the yard. Entirely without fear, he

walked between each pair of beasts in the double stall, his head reaching scarcely above the height of their legs; then, stretching up his hands to the swivels on their halters, he released each of the ponderous quadrupeds and drove her forth with minatory objurgations uttered in a piping treble.

Needless to say, these proceedings greatly pleased me. Nor was I the only person to be impressed by my little favourite's efficiency.

Mr. Taylor arrived home before I departed, and he found an opportunity privately to inform me—

'Georgie is awful cute. Why, he's learnt more in a few days than many older boys would in as many weeks. I tell you, a lot of smart thinking goes on in that little head of his.'

And I was destined to hear similar words from one who, having himself lived through the experiences that now were Georgie's, was peculiarly qualified to judge how the little fellow was acquitting himself. Herb—that Barnardo boy who was now a competent farm-hand, and who, I found, was esteemed as a lad of high character throughout the Crediton district—told me it was

surprising how quickly George learnt things, mentioning occasions when that conscientious little boy, tackling some job which demanded the strength of a man, seemed quite upset because he could not do it.

Sunday provided the opportunity for this conversation—as for another a week later.

Strolling outside the Methodist Church after dinner, I saw Herb drive up in the Taylors' buggy, with Smithers by his side (Smithers in a smart brown felt hat that Mrs. Malcolm had bought for him), and with Georgie squat their knees. They had come to attend Sunday School, as is the well-nigh universal practice of young people in country districts of Ontario—and here I may parenthetically mention that all the churches in those districts are associated with sheds, built either of wood or stone and often a hundred feet and more in length, where members and adherents, driving in from neighbouring farms, stable their vehicles.

After Sunday School, I mingled with the issuing stream of happy and well-dressed little folk (for parents in Eastern Canada stint neither pains nor dollars to have their children well and prettily dressed), my atten-

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tion being drawn to two cheerful looking youngsters who proved to be boarded-out Barnardo boys—that is to say, they, like Smithers and Georgie, were living with farmers, each of whom received five dollars a month from Peter Street to cover the little chap's board.

By Herb I was introduced to three other Barnardo boys—fine, bronzed young fellows well up in their teens—who, like himself, had passed through the boarded-out stage. They also lived in neighbouring farms, receiving substantial wages as hired hands, their views as to the desirability of going West being still unsettled.

Herb, for his part, was expecting to depart for Winnipeg in a few days' time, and under very advantageous circumstances. Instead of having to pay his railway fare, he was to be paid for making the journey, a proficiency in handling horses having secured him the job of taking a car-load of those animals to the Manitoba capital.

CHAPTER XII

IMPERIALISTS IN KNICKERBOCKERS

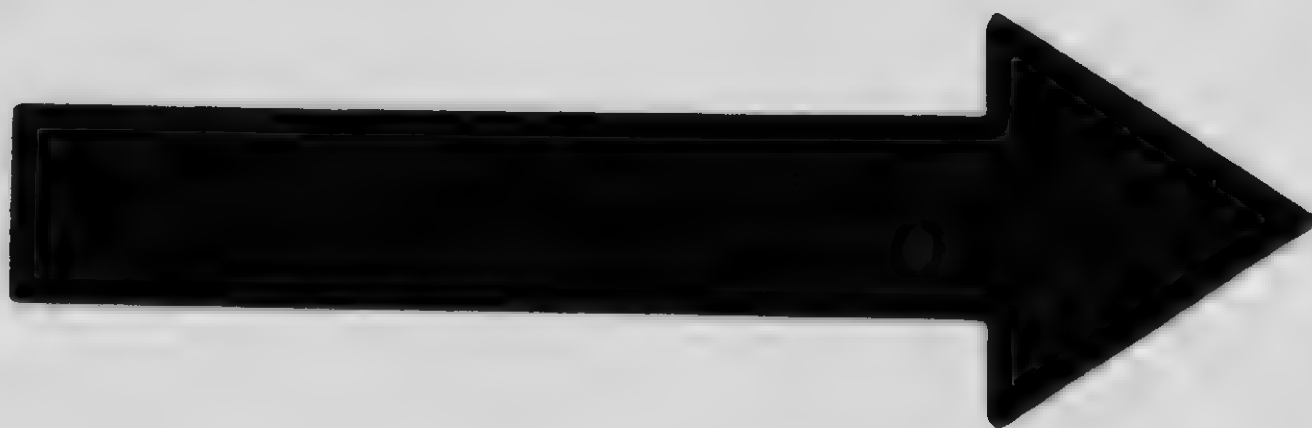
LEAVING the people of Crediton delving and seeding their gardens, I entered upon several months of nomadic existence in Old Ontario, sojourning in such widely separated localities as chanced to harbour my little friends, to whom I paid surprise visits on half-holidays snatched from the daily labour of writing this book.

Thus it came about that, after being a week at Port Perry (picturesquely situated on Lake Scugog, some fifty miles north-west of Toronto), I one morning ran eight miles up the Grand Trunk branch to the village of Seagrave—one of those happy little communities that derive a certain human sparkle from the fact that no intoxicants are allowed to be sold there. Which tempts me to interpose the remark that Canada is a country which, besides offering a good livelihood to every one willing to work for it, is far ahead

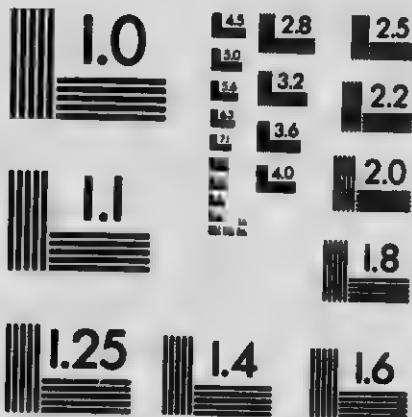
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of the United Kingdom in the application of progressive social principles. On this side of the Atlantic we do not allow the inhabitants of a district to decide, by public ballot, whether they wish the means of drunkenness to remain on sale in their midst; but 'local option' has been adopted into Canadian law, and of the districts in Ontario that have freed themselves from alcohol the number is large and increasing. Nay, so impatient do Ontarians grow of the evil wrought by strong drink that, during the time I have been penning these pages, the temperance question has achieved pre-eminence in the politics of the Province, one party offering to make it illegal for persons to treat each other to inebriating beverages, whilst the other party seeks power by promising a universal abolition of bars for the sale of spirits, wine and beer.

Visiting, then, the favoured village of Seagrave, I asked its hotel-keeper if he would kindly direct me to John Macgregor's farm—a request with which the teetotal publican promptly complied; my instructions being to walk to the top of the hill, and call at the first farmhouse on the lefthand side.



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Nor had ten minutes elapsed before I was approaching a comfortable wooden residence, in the doorway of which stood a tall young fellow in blue overalls, with a great straw hat on his head—that typical Canadian figure forming, with the bed of glowing daffodils in the front garden, and the group of sheep basking in the sunshine at the gate, a picture full of tranquillity and charm.

A minute later, he and I had recognized one another with exclamations of mutual astonishment.

‘Why, Winter, my boy, I shouldn’t have known you!’ I assured the tall lad who, when we left Leopold House, had been commended to my notice. What a consoling sight for the motherly matron if only she could have seen him there in his new home—sunburnt, smiling and so obviously content!

Soon the farmer came hurrying through the orchard, with a great jolly human expression, to greet the stranger; while his bustling wife arrived from the kitchen, equally bent on welcoming whomsoever had come to her threshold. And when they knew me for a friend of Winter’s, their desire to show me kindness appeared to be unbounded.

As we gaily chatted in the parlour, I soon realized how greatly that estimable couple appreciated Winter's cheerful industry, and the eager spirit in which he suffered himself to be taught how to handle farm stock and farm implements (whereof, it would seem, he had had no previous experience). For it will be understood that Winter was one of the lads who, arriving in Canada after reaching the age of fifteen, are under no obligation to attend school, and who, therefore—omitting the preliminary stage of being boarded-out at the expense of the Barnardo Association—step straightway into the position of agricultural apprentices.

Winter laughingly confessed how great was the strain, when he was learning to milk, on the muscles of his hand ; but from another quarter I learnt that he had now mastered the art and practised it with facility.

'There's only one thing,' said the farmer, 'he hasn't much use for—that's horses. Helping to hitch up the team is a job I can see he don't fancy. So I haven't started to learn him to drive yet.'

'I should think not, indeed !' exclaimed Mrs. Macgregor. 'Why, I'd be scared of my

life for the boy until I saw him safe back in the house again. Time enough to handle horses when he's been here six months and got more used to farm ways.'

Presently I rose to take my departure; whereupon it was revealed that the farmer and his wife were desirous, and indeed determined, that I should stay to dinner; and before the meal was over I had realized that Winter, so far from being merely an agricultural apprentice, was a new source of joy in the lives of a middle-aged couple unblessed by a child of their own.

Another short railway run, on another afternoon, took me to Sonya, where, hiring a buggy, I drove to a two-hundred-acre farm and, entering an unusually smart living-room, asked to see Master Clarence Musgrave.

'He isn't back from school yet,' explained a gracious lady in whose black silk dress, embellished by white cuffs and collar, there was a note of leisurely refinement. 'But his brother is round about the barn somewhere. If you will take a chair, my daughter Milly shall go and fetch him.'

I now recalled that my little dicky-bird of a boy had a brother on the ship; but, as

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Willie Musgrave had shyly held aloof from my circle of friends, the only thing I knew concerning him was that he had a white and solemn countenance.

Therefore, when the lady's daughter arrived with a brown-skinned youth who was, as the saying goes, smiling all over his face, I was nonplussed; and not until, by special request, he had temporarily adjusted his features to a solemn expression, was I able to identify the Willie Musgrave before me with the Willie Musgrave I had seen on the *Corinthian*.

Having bidden him run back to his beloved calves and chickens, the farmer's wife said to me—

'And so brilliant little Clarence blinded you to the good qualities of Willie! Well, the same thing happened with us at first. We also had quite a poor opinion of the older boy, because we were so wrapped up in the younger one.'

'It was not so much that I had a poor opinion of Willie—I explained, 'as that he remained completely in the background.'

'Exactly!' exclaimed the lady. 'It was just like that here—Willie right in the back-

ground, and hardly opening his mouth unless he was spoken to; and Clarence chatting and laughing and taking up everybody's attention. That wasn't right at all—letting the elder brother occupy second place. And just as soon as some of us took special notice of him, why, it was wonderful what a different boy he became. He turned out to be quite merry and cute. And so bright and willing when you ask him to do anything! I tell you, of the two boys, Willie is *my* favourite.'

'Oh, mother,' Milly protested, 'you *know* you just dote on Clarence. And how could anybody help doing so!'

'No, no,' stoutly maintained the elder lady, 'Willie, I tell you, is my favourite. And'—turning to me—'my husband feels the same, and so does my eldest son. They're never tired of saying how useful he is about the barn, and, if they ask him to do anything, they know it'll be done, and done quick and good. As for my other two sons—those young men you might have seen out with the drill as you drove up—well, I must admit they seem more taken up with Clarence.'

Here two young women came hurrying

into the room, in a flutter of half-playful eagerness, one exclaiming: 'Come along, Kate, we must have our say in this.'

'My two married daughters,' explained the farmer's wife; and, after I had been introduced, the interrupted debate was resumed with great spirit. Indeed, for over an hour I sat there listening to those four ladies as, with unflagging zest, they championed and described the rival merits of Clarence and Willie—the two lads who, obviously, had become the most cherished possessions of that grown-up family.

A Crediton memory was revived by the statement that Clarence, because arithmetic in the decimal coinage was strange to him, had been allotted to a Reader far below his standard. Another incident of his scholastic career was mentioned.

'The school is three-quarters of a mile away,' the farmer's wife explained. 'So when my husband isn't too busy, he likes to hitch in a horse and drive down to fetch Clarence. That naturally means some one else's child may get a lift, too. For instance, twice he's seen little Madge Barclay—the child of one of our neighbours—on the road,

and he's brought her along. But—would you believe it?—Stephen Barclay (that's the father) drove down to fetch Madge the other day and passed Clarence on the road, and never offered to give him a ride! There was plenty of room in his buggy—it wasn't *that*; it was just ignorance, and the sort of ignorance I've got no patience with. What's more, there's one thing we've all made up our minds to—long as we've known the Barclays, we've got no further use for them if they can't treat our two boys just the same as anybody else's children. I'll not have any one look down on Clarence and Willie as Home boys, that's a sure thing; and the sooner our neighbours understand it, the better.' And on that point the three daughters proved to be in indignant harmony with their mother.

That afternoon Clarence was picked up by one of the last persons he would have expected to meet upon the road. On espying the little figure afar off, I bade my driver jog steadily along, making no sign. But when we were still some thirty yards away, the quick young eyes recognized a familiar face in the unfamiliar buggy; and the little

fellow came racing forward, waving his cap, and smiling his golden smile. For if Clarence had formed many new ties in Canada, he still was faithful to his *Corinthian* friendship; and on our drive his face was aglow, and his eyes shone with joy, as he prattled of the times he was having on the farm, and of those splendid afternoons when some one took him down to the beautiful big lake.

It was good to meet my little dicky-bird boy once more; but very hard to be forced so soon again to say good-bye.

Leaving Port Perry a few days later, I revisited Toronto, and thence traversed anew the busy and interesting section of railroad skirting the coast of Lake Ontario to the south-west. But at the fine city of Hamilton, I entered an eastward-bound Grand Trunk train, and so was soon travelling through the famous Niagara Fruit Belt—that broad stretch of vineyards and orchards extending forty miles, with the great blue inland sea reaching to a sky horizon on the left, and with the escarpment of the uplands rising as a continuous green mountain on the right—that escarpment which, at its point of contact with the broad torrent of

water escaping from Lake Erie, causes a spectacle of nature that has become famous throughout the world.

But on that occasion a visit to Niagara Falls was not in my programme. I was, however, concerned to view the Fruit Belt in its spring aspect. That fair region had often been visited by me in summer and autumn, when, on looking one way, you see an orderly forest of trees hanging thick with blushing peaches, rosy apples, or juicy pears, plums and quinces, and where, on looking another way, you see large fields aligned with trellised vines festooned with bunches of grapes, pale green or purple. Now I wanted to feast my eyes on the vast acreages of fruit-blossom—which, on that sunny afternoon, provided vistas of shimmering white and softest pink ; all the delectable landscape answering rather to one's conception of Paradise than seeming to belong to practical, every-day life.

The fundamental reason for my travelling through that choice scenery was to visit a little boy who, since I consorted with him on the *Corinthian*, had figured in my mind as two totally distinct little boys, namely,

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as a nice little boy and a naughty little boy. Stanley Lockwood, endowed with intellectual gifts remarkable in a child of seven, had on the ship betrayed an equal aptitude for conducting himself with winning grace and for indulging in a frenzy of kicking, pinching and screaming misbehaviour, in open defiance of human authority.

Therefore, I was anxious about Stanley; he being, in fact, the only boy in my circle about whom I was anxious.

Fenwick figured on my list as the nearest village to the farmhouse that had received this naughty little good boy; and according, I took up my quarters in Fenwick's small, but teetotal, hotel, from which one afternoon I drove out through undulating fruit-lands (where huge apple trees in full bloom towered against the blue sky like hills of snow) to the prettily-situated home in which I found, not only Stanley, but two other Barnardo boys—brothers, who arrived in Canada, and under that roof, eighteen months before.

When I dropped in, the lady was seated in her parlour winding a ball of worsted; and Stanley (the only other occupant of the apartment, save for a large white cat asleep

on the hearthrug) was squatting on a stool at her feet, holding the skein. There was something delightfully reposeful and home-like in the scene; and, following upon the cordial welcome accorded me, I successfully begged for a resumption of the occupation my intrusion had interrupted.

'Well, now, Stanley, isn't it nice to have one of your friends come to see you?' said the lady. 'Do you know' (turning to me), 'I have heard all about that wonderful voyage, and your name has often been mentioned. It is quite clear he had a very happy time on the ship.'

Hers was a kind face, full of character; and the even, thoughtful voice suggested a mind of some culture.

'And how do you think he seems?' she asked, on noting, perhaps, the close scrutiny to which I was subjecting my little friend.

He was certainly looking in the pink of health. He also appeared to have shot upwards since his arrival in Canada. But my private thoughts were puzzling over the psychological, rather than the physical, Stanley. In some way that I could not explain to myself, he seemed changed.

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As I sat there talking with one lobe of my brain, and thinking with the other, my perplexity concerning the boy took the form of marvelling at his environment. It was a parlour stuffed full of vases, knick-knacks and coloured mats and draperies, all neatly arranged, and with many of the fragile ornaments displayed on slender tables that obstructed free migration about the apartment. To associate that parlour with the *Corinthian* Stanley—in certain moods—was to be affrighted by a mental picture of glass and china smashing in a general disruption of flimsy furniture and cherished family ornaments.

But, as I say, Stanley sat there in sweet domestic docility, holding a skein of worsted.

'And he's getting along nicely in his new home?' I at last brought myself, with affected jauntiness, to inquire.

'Oh, yes,' the lady lightly replied. 'We understand one another perfectly. I never had a better-behaved little boy in the house.'

For a moment, I hesitated to catch Stanley's eye. Knowing what I knew—and what he knew that I knew—there seemed a danger of finding him looking somewhat sheepish. But

he wasn't. He met my gaze with a most comfortable smile.

Again I say, I was puzzled. Had he been intimidated? No; apart from the fact that he was not a boy amenable to coercion, he did not look in any way cowed. Every now and then his foster-mother received from him a smile absolutely frank, spontaneous and complacent. Obviously he was quite happy. But he was changed. The element of defiant lawlessness seemed to have departed from him.

When the worsted was all wound, Stanley, at the lady's suggestion, took me to see the hens. In that conscientious and well-informed exponent of poultry management, who proved so quick to distinguish layers from broodies, it was indeed difficult to recognize the harum-scarum little buccaneer of the *Corinthian*. Concerning the thriving families of chicks, his exposition was especially exact and comprehensive; the coops being, it seemed, his personal charge.

On my altered little friend going off to seek his Barnardo brethren in the pastures, I seized the opportunity for private conference with the lady.

'As perhaps you guessed,' she smilingly related, 'Stanley was rather a handful at first. It began with his arrival at Fenwick. On the journey, it seemed, he had been as good as gold; but the moment he got out of the train, and was handed over to my husband and myself, he started to run amuck. It really was a very wild scene while it lasted. He kicked and he screamed, and the things he said were really delicious. He shouted out that it was Canada he was going to, and this wasn't Canada! What was more, he wasn't going with horrid people like us. We tried to coax him into the buggy, but it was no good—he bolted! Then there was a great to-do. Away went Stanley along the side-track to the head of the train; then he darted across the line and into the freight-shed, where he got behind a heap of baggage. Of course there was a hue and cry after him, and when his hiding-place was discovered he ran out of the shed and down the platform to the waiting-room. There some one caught him, but he broke away again and disappeared into the agent's office. I tell you, the whole dépôt was in an uproar, with the trainmen and a lot of passengers hanging out of the

cars, wondering what in the world was happening. Finally they caught him under the table of the telegraph operator; and my husband took him up in his arms and brought him back to me, struggling—violently but vainly. Then we got into the buggy with him between us, and drove away.'

'Did the rebellious fit last long?' I asked.

'No,' the lady explained with a smile. 'Before we had gone a hundred yards, it was not even necessary to hold him. He began asking me questions about the horse, in which he became enormously interested. Before the ride was over, I had quite made up my mind that, though he was by far the most difficult boy I had received, he was probably the boy who would be most responsive to—to—management.'

'With a strap?' I hazarded.

'No, no,' laughed the lady. 'I never use physical force. It's a humble theory of mine that there is much more power in love than in blows, and, therefore, that it must be more effective in controlling a child's impulses than any number of beatings could be. I'm very fond of boys, and I like to

believe that, if one takes the trouble to understand them, one's moral influence, with a little common-sense firmness, answers all requirements. Please don't understand me as dogmatizing about it. I am told there are children so constituted that nothing but the rod can curb them. I can only say, if such a child came into my hands (and that hasn't happened yet), I should play the weakling and send him back for some one else to deal with.'

Had I been disposed to question the soundness of that lady's principles and practice, my arguments would have found no sanction from the aspect and demeanour of her two other Barnardo boys, who proved to be as happy and well-behaved a pair of lads as heart could desire. As for Stanley, I no longer had any misgivings concerning him.

Nor did any other of my little friends, when I went to see them, prove less skilfully transplanted in the New World.

It was a sturdy and talkative Douglas whom I found on a farm situated no great way by rail from Toronto—in which city his mother (with her little daughter) had meanwhile arrived, full of gratitude for the

prospect of well-paid employment that immediately opened before her. His foster-father (a Barnardo boy grown to man's estate, with a wife and family) told me of the lad's keen interest in the livestock on the farm; yet was I somewhat taken aback when, on my asking Douglas what he would like to have on his birthday, he promptly and earnestly answered: 'A horse.'

To see Kenneth and the Twins I went north into the Muskoka country—that glorious region of lakes and waterfalls and rocky heights, richly wooded with spruce, hemlock and cedar. Tonic properties of the climate, associated with beautiful scenery and fine opportunities for fishing and shooting, have made the Muskoka country famous as a health resort, whither thousands of holiday-makers and sportsmen repair every summer. In districts where the timber has been cleared, mixed farming is pursued, yielding such modest returns as may be secured from undulating fields where tree-stumps and protruding rocks present constant hindrances to the plough.

In a word, agriculture in those districts has not—as elsewhere in Ontario—justified

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the establishment of creameries, cheese-factories, canneries and other local markets for the farmer, who therefore finds himself with a superabundance of food values not readily convertible into cash. Thus does he eagerly welcome a Barnardo boy boarder, who helps to consume the superfluous margin of eggs, cream, butter, milk, bacon and other home produce, and whose presence ensures (in the five dollars a month remitted from Peter Street) a regular inflowing of acceptable currency. And so it will be noted that social conditions combine with the climate to make that Muskoka country an ideal place for the upbringing of the younger Barnardo children. They live continuously amid the beautiful surroundings, and in the health-giving air, which well-to-do Canadian citizens are able to enjoy for only brief periods. They, equally with children boarded out in other parts of the Province, experience the boon of unstinted, wholesome food. They find ample scope for play and sports in the leisure left by school attendance. Lastly, instead of being isolated among Canadian children, they find themselves in a community of their fellows from the old land.

Arriving at Utterson, I called at the village school during luncheon recess, and asked for my little Twins; whereupon was I soon surrounded by a high-spirited congregation of Barnardo boys—one hailing me as a *Corinthian* acquaintance, though indeed I had no definite memory of his face; the others proving to have arrived under Mr. Owen's escort during the three preceding years. While we were still talking and laughing, the clannish character of our gathering began to weigh on my conscience, for, standing a few yards away, were several Canadian lads who, as their wistful expression indicated, did not quite see why the accident of birth should preclude them from so much fun and good fellowship.

The Clark brothers, I was told, attended a school some two miles from Utterson; and to that school I set out, at 3.30 p.m., along a sandy road penetrating a rocky and romantic country, which smelt sweetly of ferns and the balsam tree. On the way I met my beloved 'Twins, ambling homeward with happy, shirring faces, their little brown legs innocent of shoes and stockings. For in sandy districts it is ever the preference

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of youth to go barefooted—a practice which, enjoying great vogue during summer months in the Muskoka country, is full of the holiday spirit.

With those two laughing little faces very close to mine, I was soon listening to thrilling adventures. One Twin, sent to draw a bucket of water, had tumbled into the well; the other Twin, sent to fetch the cows, had got lost in the woods. But the resourcefulness of a city-bred lad will usually see him through rural scrapes in which inexperience involves him. John found his way home before the first search-party had passed beyond hearing; and nobody knew Willie had slipped into the well until, having pulled himself out, he ran into the house to dry his clothes.

The home of the Twins harboured two other Barnardo lads, and I found further groups residing in neighbouring farmhouses—facts which partly prepared me for the discovery that, in the local school, Barnardo boys and girls formed an overwhelming majority of the pupils. Their upbringing was clearly revealed as an important local industry, in which a select circle of motherly

housewives had reached proficiency through experience. At first I felt that this liberal treatment of Muskoka households was rather hard on the thousands of families who, from all other parts of Ontario, are constantly applying in vain for Barnardo boys and girls. But undoubtedly it was wise to develop that elevated and healthy country as a nursery for the younger children. On entering their teens, the lads are usually removed to areas of higher agriculture and industrial development.

From Utterson I had to go fourteen miles on the Grand Trunk, and four miles in a buggy, for the pleasure of gazing at the beaming and bronzed countenance of Kenneth. He also was living in a family that contained several, and in a neighbourhood that contained many, brother emigrants from the British Isles. All were revelling in the glorious hot weather; and I was therefore the more surprised that, on being asked which they preferred, they should have hesitated over the respective attractions of the Canadian summer and the Canadian winter. It counted for much that wild raspberries—in addition to strawberries, gooseberries,

blackberries and huckleberries—fruit abundantly in the woods. On the other hand, skating and sliding are attractive sports, and it is great fun, I learnt, to take a hand-sleigh to school and toboggan down all the hilly parts of the snow-covered road. The boys told me that only very rarely, even in the depth of winter, was school attendance interrupted by the weather.

In the Muskoka country I came across several Barnardo girls, and each had rosy cheeks, a merry laugh and the air of a well-beloved daughter of the house. It happened that my dozen or so *Corinthian* heroines had been allotted to other districts, where—as I learnt at Peterborough in July—all had become well established. Those that I personally visited proved pictures of smiling content.

On emerging from school age, the Barnardo girl, like the Barnardo boy, begins to earn wages in place of having board-money remitted from the Association, the only difference being that she takes up with work inside, instead of outside, the house. As to the subsequent course of the Barnardo girl's career, it is merely necessary to mention that the marriage register at Peterborough is a

portly folio in which new entries are written almost daily. It was my privilege to meet some Barnardo wives in Canada—well-to-do young ladies, all of them—and, where there were children, it was instructive to note how bright-eyed and prosperously attired was the new generation.

In a word, on all hands I found proof of the success that attends this work of private Imperialism. True, I did not chance upon many Barnardo farmers in Ontario, which was the less to be wondered at because, in previous years, I had chanced upon so many in the Prairie Provinces, where affluence proves the sure reward of industry and a thorough early training. It was, however, easy enough to find Barnardo boys who—thanks to educational opportunities provided by indulgent foster-parents, or to self-imposed attendance at night-schools—had exchanged their agricultural destiny for a professional or commercial career; as also it was easy to find Barnardo girls who, by the same ladders, had climbed from domestic service to positions affording more scope for mental powers. Indeed, Eastern Canada is sprinkled with Barnardo immigrants who have developed

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into ministers of religion, doctors, hospital nurses, engineers, bankers, merchants, school teachers, shorthand writers, bookkeepers, typists, etc. Such city workers number, however, less than 5,000, agriculture claiming about 20,000 of the Barnardo contribution to Canada's population.

Thus to a close draws my enumeration of facts arising out of the emigration of certain children—the samples on whom my eyes chanced to rest. Writing these last lines nearly six months after the *Corinthian* party was distributed, I am able to record that all my little friends are settled satisfactorily in Canada—all, that is, save one, and he, alas, the favourite. Georgie Tims proved mutinous under the discipline of Mrs. Ebenezer Taylor, and, at my request, was removed to a Muskoka household. On the way thither the little fellow, with unblinking eyes, confessed to fib-telling and deliberate disobedience. And it came to pass that the second foster-mother lost patience; while he himself wrote to me: 'I have had three whippings, and I have told one lie sence I have been hear. . . . I remained, your loving boy, George Tims.' Thus did the situation suggest

corroboration of a belief which, as was known to me, found lodgment in the mind of Mr. Owen—the belief, namely, that I had been ‘spoiling that boy.’ Manifestly, then, it behoved me to break off our correspondence and recede from the little fellow’s purview. Be sure, however, that, unseen myself, I nevertheless am watching. Comforting reports are already arriving from the third home.

Smithers himself, as last I saw him on my second visit to Crediton (when August was far advanced and humming-birds poised and darted amid the brilliant garden flowers), was a big, strong, brown boy in blue overalls and a great Canadian straw hat. Besides learning to milk, he had been useful with the hay, wheat and barley harvests; for midsummer holidays, then far advanced, had afforded scope for outdoor occupations.

‘I shall be jolly glad, sir,’ he exclaimed, ‘when I leave school altogether. Won’t it be fine to start work properly and begin earning money!’

Meanwhile, loth to squander the ten-cent pieces that come his way, he has opened a little account with the bank at Crediton.

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